

## ИСТОРИОГРАФИЯ, ИСТОЧНИКОВЕДЕНИЕ И МЕТОДЫ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

### ПРОБЛЕМЫ КОМПЛЕКСНОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ИСТОРИЧЕСКИХ ДОКУМЕНТОВ

*H. Tumans*

#### INTERPRETING THE TEXT OF PSEUDO-XENOPHON

In the author's opinion, the main paradox of the *Athenaion Politeia* ('The Constitution of the Athenians') consists in the fact that its author endeavoured to combine two opposite positions: those of a critic and apologist of Athenian democracy. Firstly, not only is the structure of the text aimed at making an apology for democracy, but the greatest part of the argument is devoted to justifying the most controversial aspects of democratic rule. Consequently, in spite of its apparently ideological ambiguity, the author's main ideological trend is quite evident in the *Athenaion Politeia*. Secondly, this work well matches the context of contemporary sophistic rhetoric and sympotic literature, for in these genres the author was expected to take opposite positions alternately. Thirdly, it is quite possible that at that period two ideologies could have coexisted in the same mind: old aristocratic values, based upon ethical postulates, and a new democratic ideology, based upon pragmatic principles. In such a situation political thinking and patriotism could naturally lead to victory of the new ideology, as it is attested in the *Athenaion Politeia*. The author concludes that Pseudo-Xenophon should be regarded as neither a "young", nor an "old" oligarch, but rather a democrat of aristocratic or oligarchic origin. Refs 47.

*Keywords:* Pseudo-Xenophon, Old Oligarch, Athenian Democracy, Critic, Apology.

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#### ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ ТЕКСТА ПСЕВДО-КСЕНОФОНТА

По мнению автора статьи, главный парадокс «Афинской политики» состоит в том, что Псевдо-Ксенофонт пытался соединить две противоположные позиции: критика и апологета афинской демократии. Во-первых, не только структура текста нацелена на то, чтобы оправдать демократию, но и большая часть аргументации посвящена оправданию наиболее критикуемых аспектов демократического правления. Следовательно, несмотря на явно идеологическую двусмысленность «Афинской политики», главная идеологическая тенденция автора вполне очевидна. Во-вторых, эта работа вполне соответствует контексту современной ей софистической риторики и симпотической литературы, когда автор по законам жанра должен попере-

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менно занимать противоположные позиции. В-третьих, вполне возможно, что в этот период две идеологии могли сосуществовать в одном сознании: старые аристократические ценности, основанные на этических постулатах, и новая демократическая идеология, основанная на прагматических принципах. В такой ситуации политическое мышление и патриотизм могли естественно привести к победе новой идеологии, о чем свидетельствует «Афинская полития». Автор статьи приходит к выводу, что Псевдо-Ксенофонт следует рассматривать как сторонника демократии, а не как ее критика — молодого или старого олигарха. Библиогр. 47 назв.

*Ключевые слова:* Псевдо-Ксенофонт, старый олигарх, афинская демократия, критик, апология.

As you know, the interpretation of the text of a historical source is one of the most difficult problems which a historian has to face. In addition, this problem is further complicated by existence of different approaches to interpretation, and these approaches can be both of methodological and ideological in nature. Therefore, a historian has to define himself and make his choice, siding with one historiographical tradition over another. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that science wins only when a historian's choice is determined by methodological and scientific considerations, but not by ideological premises or predilections. As an excellent illustration of this fact may be served by the history of studying and commenting on the treatise "The Constitution of the Athenians" written by an anonymous author, known in history under the name of Pseudo-Xenophon. In the vast literature devoted to this issue is reflected all known approaches and interpretations, although "things", as the saying goes, "are still right where they started". As a result, this topic opens up ample opportunities for searching for the new solutions and approaches. Without claiming to be the final decision of the question, which is hardly possible in principle, I would like to make some observations of my own.

By the old tradition which arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pseudo-Xenophon is considered to be an oligarchic critic of Athenian democracy [Kirchhoff 1874, pp. 1–51; Gutschmied 1876, pp. 632–635; Kalinka 1896, pp. 27–83; Stail 1920; Münscher 1932, pp. 209–220; Prestel 1937; Gomme 1940, pp. 211–245; Nestle 1943, pp. 232–244; Fuks 1954, pp. 21–35; Romilly 1962, pp. 225–241; Bowersock 1966, pp. 33–46; Leduc 1976; Roberts 1994; Ober 1999]. In the meantime the nickname "Old Oligarch" was assigned to him<sup>1</sup>.

Apparently he became "old" because for some authors there was the senile "grumbling and irritation" in literally every line of his treatise [Nikityuk 2002, p.102]. This stereotype has so firmly introduced into scientific use that another view of things often seems simply inappropriate. However, the immediate acquaintance with historiography shows that the picture is not so simple and unambiguous as it might seem at first glance. Even within the generally accepted concept there are various appraisals of Pseudo-Xenophon's ideological position: some historians consider him an incursive oligarch [Müller–Strübing 1884, pp. 1–188; Kupferschmid 1932, 52f, 54f; Fuks. 1954, 28ff ], while others more cautiously point to his leaning toward some aspects of Athenian democratic rule [Stail 1920, 27f; Nestle 1943, p. 236; Frisch 1976, p. 103; Sealey 1973, pp. 253–263]. We need hardly mention that there is no solidarity in dating of the treatise among researchers — generally, it fluctuates from the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> to the first decade of the fourth century B. C. [Kirchhoff 1878, pp. 1–25; Hohl 1950, pp. 26–35; Forrest 1970, pp. 107–116; 1997, pp. 352–357].

In addition, disagreements arise even on this occasion — whether to consider the author of the treatise an old or a young oligarch, since not everyone hears in his text senile

<sup>1</sup> Presumably, this nickname was assigned to Pseudo-Xenophon in his work: [Murrey 1897, pp. 167–169]; see also: [Kalinka 1913, pp. 17–21].

“grumbling and irritation” [Leduc 1976, p.171; Nikityuk 2002, p. 102]. Finally, in recent decades a new tendency which outlines a departure from the old schemes has emerged. For example, V. Forrest rejected the familiar view of the treatise Pseudo-Xenophon as a political pamphlet and looked at it through the prism of the conflict of generations in democratic Athens at the end of the 5th century B. C., and treated it as a student work (a lecture for the class-room or the study-group), in which two young men argue the opposite points of view about Athenian democracy [Forrest 1975, 43f]. In turn, J. Nakategawa stated that the “Old Oligarch” had departed from the postulates of oligarchic ideology, and also revealed his pragmatic approach to the issue of sympathy for democracy [Nakategawa 1995, pp. 29–46; Critical notes to them: Roscalla 1995, pp. 105–130]. Finally, S. Hornblower made the most radical breakthrough accepting the previously expressed view that the text belonged to the genre of symposium literature and suggesting that its author is an adherent of democracy, who took on the role of the oligarch in the framework of a symposium conversation game [Hornblower 2000, pp. 364, 378].

Thus, the composition of the so-called “Old Oligarch” constantly attracts the attention of specialists which offer various, often directly opposite interpretations of its content. To explain such a steady and relentless interest in Pseudo-Xenophon and his work several factors can be pointed out. Firstly, this is the anonymity of the text, which creates a constant temptation to ascribe this work to one or another writer or politician [Kalinka 1913, p.17–21; Nestle 1943, p.232ff; Frisch 1976, pp. 88–105; Leduc 1976, pp. 45–55; Forrest 1975, 38f]. Secondly, the author does not explicitly state his final and true position in relation to the question considered by him and does not determine the purpose of writing the text, which induces scientists to an independent search for answers to these questions, relying solely on the interpretation of certain phrases. It is clear that on such unreliable foundations one can build anything and the results of this construction will never be able to convince everyone else. Thirdly, the text in itself is highly contradictory, which confuses researchers and makes the author’s position unclear, rather guessed at, than defined. Hence, there is such a striking diversity of opinions that can make Pseudo-Xenophon either an oligarch or a democrat.

Obviously, in this situation it is necessary to formulate the methodological bases for such an investigation before taking on the next search for Pseudo-Xenophon’s ideological platform. In that regard, it seems that if not finding an answer, then at least an approach to it can be achieved by analyzing the three components of the problem. In other words, I see three means by which one may arrive at a conclusion in this research. The first is to establish the authorship of the treatise, which would allow us to interpret the text on the basis of the ideological premises of its author. The second is to analyze the text itself. And the third is to define the cultural and ideological context which allows for defining the genre and ideological tendency of the work. All these paths are trails already blazed by generations of scientists, each of whom preferred to follow “his own way”. Now we need only to take these three ways in succession and try to link them together.

## 1

Concerning the first direction of research, we must immediately recognize that our possibilities in determining the authorship of the “The Constitution of the Athenians” are extremely limited, if not to say, equal to zero. We have no data that would allow us to “find” the author of the text with a sufficient degree of certainty. In favor of the Xeno-

phon authorship there are only three extremely weak arguments: 1) the fact that the text is found in the collection of works by Xenophon; 2) an Attic dialect in which this work is written and in which Xenophon wrote in general; 3) separate textual parallels between “The Constitution of the Athenians” and some other places in Xenophon’s works<sup>2</sup>. The first two facts in general cannot be recognized as arguments at all, and as for parallels, they are much more to be found with the texts of other authors, especially of Thucydides<sup>3</sup>. The authorship of Xenophon is primarily contradicted by a literary style, which is characterized by a fair amount of errors<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, from the moment of finding the text of *The Constitution of the Athenians*, a steady association of its anonymous author with Xenophon has arisen. It seems that just that fact had a decisive influence on the development of the “Old Oligarch” stereotype. Xenophon’s aristocratic beliefs are well known by his works and apparently therefore the attention of researchers was completely captured by critical (though relatively rare!) statements about Athenian democracy, while the apologetic passages remained as if unnoticed or not appreciated. Therefore Pseudo-Xenophon is always viewed as an oligarchy-oriented aristocrat who either stayed in Athens or emigrated to Sparta [Ober 1999, p. 22; see also: Herrmann-Otto 1996, p. 139; Hohl 1950, pp. 26–35]. There is also an opinion that the author of the tractate was a foreigner, yet certainly an oligarch [Mattingly 1997, p. 355]. It is hardly surprising the oligarchic, anti-democratic view of the author is automatically postulated as given. For instance: “Die Identität seines Autors zu lüften, ist jedoch nicht geglückt. Wohl darf seine Zuordnung zum Kreis der antidemokratisch eingestellten „Oppositionellen“ zur Zeit des Perikles als gesichert (sic!) gelten” [Herrmann-Otto 1996, p. 134]. In other words, we do not know who pseudo-Xenophon was, although we know for sure he was an oligarch.

Only gradually, as the hypnotic effect of Xenophon’s name was being dispelled, the researchers’ conviction in the oligarchic character of the work began to decline as well. Therefore, the author was searched out mostly among the Sophists<sup>5</sup>, but these hypotheses are not convincing ones either. Thus, we can only admit the fact of the fundamental ano-

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in “The Constitution of the Athenians” democracy is represented as the power of the lower social groups (1. 2 — 8; see comments on it: [Nakategawa. 1995, p. 34; Ober 1999, pp. 17, 22]; similarly Socrates defined the demos as the ruling class in Athens, at Xenophon (Xen. Memor., IV, 2, 7). However, it was most likely, a cliché, as Aristotle also characterized democracy as the power of “free and poor” (Arist. Pol. 1290b, 18–20). Then “Old Oligarch” blames the Athenian democracy for “the immorality of slaves and metics” (I, 10), and in the same vein Theramenes speaks in Xenophon (Xen. Hell., 2, 3, 48). But it is obvious, that this is also a cliché, because many of the Athenians could argue in such a way that time.

<sup>3</sup> Weber-Schäfer 1976, pp. 163–166; Raaflaub 1992, 12, 21, 42; Nakategawa 1995, p. 44; It is revealing that if usually the parallels between Pseudo-Xenophon and Thucydides are explained by the fact that Thucydides read the text of the “Old Oligarch”, then Hornblower quite decisively proves a negative and claims that *The Constitution of the Athenians* was written after Thucydides’s *History* and that the latter contains complex of reflections to it; on this basis he transfers the dating of *The Constitution of the Athenians* to the first decade of 4<sup>th</sup> century B. C. See [Hornblower 2000, 366 ff, pp. 370–373].

<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-Xenophon’s stylistic defects have been analyzed repeatedly — see for example: [Frisch. 1976, pp. 164–184; Gomme 1940, pp. 58–61; Ober 1999, 26]. On this basis Leduc decided that the “Old Oligarch” would be more correct to be considered as the “Young Oligarch”, in the light of his inexperience in literary creativity [Leduc 1976, pp. 171–175]; and Forrest for similar reasons suggested considering “The Constitution of the Athenians” not a treatise, but a student’s work of young people, see [Forrest 1975, 44 f].

<sup>5</sup> About ideological parallels between the author of *The Constitution of the Athenians* and sophists see: [Forrest 1975, p. 42f, 44f; Nakategawa 1995, p. 43f]; some researchers tended to see in the “Old Oligarch” the sophist Critias — for example [Müller-Strübing 1984, hs. 90; Norwood 1999, p. 380 ff].

nymity of the text. One has to agree with J. Ober that biographical approach is obviously absurd in relation to the anonymous text [Ober 1999, p. 27].

## 2

In this situation, the analysis of the text itself becomes of primary importance, however, the results are also disappointing. The text turns out to be so complicated and contradictory that it can be the basis for directly conflicting concepts. Usually the interpretation of a text is based on the axiomatic assumption of the author's oligarchic position. Therefore, *Athenaion Politeia* is automatically viewed as a stark criticism of Athenian democracy. For instance, from the author's statement that the existing democratic system cannot be improved by separate enhancements (Ath. Pol. 3, 9), a conclusion follows that the author's goal was to prove the necessity of overthrowing the democracy [Blösel 2000, p. 84]. Yet, why? The answer is obvious — because he was an oligarch! By this the text gains a meaning it was previously lacking. And this also enables one to make conclusions about the author — for instance, that he considered himself to be part of the disenfranchised minority in Athens (Ath. Pol., 3, 12; see: [Blösel 2000, p. 85]) although he never clearly says so.

Understanding the text makes the existence of irony in it even harder. Moreover, in the scientific literature the author's irony is sometimes noted [Nakategawa 1995, 36; Ober 1999, 26f.], which only exacerbates the state of affairs, because irony itself needs an explanation; and besides, it does not make itself obvious and we need to adopt a certain position to see it. Some researchers find not only irony but also cynicism in the text [Herrmann-Otto 1996, p.136]. An opinion has been even voiced that *Athenaion Politeia* is not a tractate but private letter [Hohl 1950, p. 30]. However, this case also requires adequate understanding.

The main problem is that in the text of Pseudo-Xenophon there are both critical and panegyric statements about Athenian democracy. It is the necessity of explaining this phenomenon that induces researchers to create different versions, for example, to postulate the author's dual value system [Nakategawa 1995, p.39], to consider the text as a symposium game with agonizing paradoxes [Hornblower 2000, 366, 376f] or as a rhetorical exercise [Forrest 1975, 43f]. The author himself can arguably be imagined in two with equal likelihood — as a patriotic Athenian, having a discussion with Spartan opponents [Marr 1996, p. 40], or as a foreigner arguing with Athenians about the Athenian constitution [Mattingly 1997, p. 355]. Thus, the recognition of the ambivalent nature of discourses in the *The Constitution of the Athenians* is the only real achievement of scholarly criticism nowadays. However, this achievement does not allow us to reveal the concept of the author himself. A content-related analysis of the text can be useful only if we know what the author intended to say, but namely this is the main matter of dispute. Here the circle is completed...

Actually, everything depends on the interpretation of a fundamental passage of Pseudo-Xenophon. Having described democratic governance as rule of the lower classes, he makes the following statement: "Of course, such orders are not necessary in order that the state become the best, but democracy can most likely survive in these circumstances. The *demos* after all does not want perfect laws when they put them in slavery, but its want to

rule. Bad laws do not interest them.” (1, 8). How does the author treat this, positively or negatively? That is the question! J. Ober fairly concludes that in this place the author contrasts the interests of the *polis* and the interests of democracy, and also defines democracy as the power of one social group (*demos*) in their own interests [Ober 1999, pp. 17, 22]. Whereas, J. Nakategawa, having considered Pseudo-Xenophon’s passage in the context of the whole second chapter, which describes in detail the benefits received by *demos* from democracy and sea dominion, comes to the conclusion that this text proclaims a new ideal of justice based on the power of force and the profit motive [Nakategawa, 1995, p. 45; polemic to them: Lapini 1997, pp. 326–335]. The logic of this ideal is absolutely pragmatic: only democracy can provide security and economic prosperity to the city, and therefore this power is fair and necessary [Nakategawa 1995, 39f, 45f]. However, this interpretation is based only on a presumption that the second chapter reflects the author’s own views [Nakategawa 1995, 38f]. But how can this be proved, how to check? How do I know where exactly the author is speaking for himself? It seems to me that in this situation it makes sense to abstain from the deepening into the semantic layers of the text and follow the movement of the author’s thoughts, having subjected the compositional structure of the text to a simple analysis.

So, if we follow the logical development of thought in “The Constitution of the Athenians”, we can notice an interesting regularity. Since the first line, the author uses a characteristic method — at first he makes a critical remark about an aspect of the Athenian democracy and then proceeds to a detailed examination of the indicated question, finding a number of arguments which justify the existing order of things. This method assigns, with some digressions, the composition of the whole work. Thus, the text structure fits into the formula: “the thesis — the antithesis”. Let’s look on a specific material how this structure works.

At the very beginning of “The Constitution of the Athenians” there is the thesis that the author (or one of the authors) does not approve of the Athenian democracy for the reason that the *demos* lives better than the aristocracy (του; πονηρου; αμεινον προαττειν η του; χρηστου; — 1.1) Immediately follows the antithesis, in which the author declares that the Athenians successfully maintain their state system, although from the point of view of other Greeks, he looks abnormal. In fact, this is a program statement of the whole work, because here the main substance of the polemic discourse is given. Critical thesis is made from the position of the aristocracy and of all Greek traditional culture, which claimed the superiority of the aristocracy over the *demos* [Blösel 2000, p. 8; Heftner 2003, p. 5; Tumans 2002, pp. 83 ff, 95 f]. It is significant that the author (or the second opponent) does not dispute this thesis and the values stated in it, implicitly accepting them as something self-evident, but instead he advances the antithesis, that is, fundamentally different values. The essence of this antithesis consists that the supreme value is the benefit for the *demos* and that the question of usefulness or inadequacy of this state system will be considered not from positions of old ideas of justice, but from positions of the advantage for the *demos*. Thus, for the first time the author formulated a fundamentally new approach to the discussion of government forms. All further arguments are constructed in this way.

1. So, following the declared principle, at first it is proved that in the Athenian state the *demos* has priority over the rich and noble, because it is the *demos* that “puts the ships in motion and give power to the state” (1. 2–3). Within this thesis the author has to respond to

the classic reproach that democracy gives power to “wrong” people who are characterized by “the greatest lack of education, lack of discipline and meanness” (εφν δε; τωΞ/ δηῶμω/ αφμαθιῶα τε πλειῶστη και; αφταξιῶα και; πονηριῶα — 1. 5) Expatiations on this topic come down to the following: “ignorance, rudeness and benevolence of such a person benefit rather, (μᾶλλον λυσιτελει) than the dignity, wisdom and malevolence of the noble” (1. 7). Here the principle of profit evidently triumphs over the principle of valor and nobility. Then follows the passage quoted above that such orders do not make the state better, but are useful to the demos and promote the democracy preservation (1.8). Thus, the idea of profit is further developed and brings democracy to the rank of absolute value, i.e. value in itself.

2. The next critical thesis place on the Athenians the blame for “the immorality of slaves and metics” (1. 10). This is answered, explaining that the Athenians benefit from this state of affairs, since it is in the interests of the sea power (1. 11–12).

3. Then the Athenians are reproached for the fact that they have abolished the societies engaged in gymnastic and physical performances (1. 13). The answer follows the prescribed pattern: the Athenian *demos* want to receive benefits and act as is convenient for themselves. At the same time, it is added, unabashedly: “And in the courts it (the *demos*) does not so much care for justice as for his own benefit” (1. 13). If this phrase is taken out of context, one can see criticism, irony or a cruel joke. But if it is perceived in the context, then there is no irony, because the idea of usefulness as the main value criterion is again shown here.

4. Then the relations with the allies are examined, — the Athenians are accused of the fact that they expel and kill the noble everywhere, and support the *demos* (1. 14). Naturally, this is justified by the fact that in such a way the Athenians retain democracy and derive material benefits for themselves (1. 15). Developing this topic, a reproach that the allies are forced to go to Athens for legal cases is brought up for the discussion (1. 16). As a response, is adduced a series of arguments which comes down to the next citation of the benefits that Athens receives from this state of affairs (1. 17–18), and the topic is closed down with the idea that the possession of the oversea territories is useful to the Athenians also by making them proficient in marine affairs (1. 19).

5. The question of the military force of the Athenian state becomes natural continuation of the previous discussion. Here the reproach is not formulated, but it is guessed and the thesis is introduced by the words that the hoplites’ army seems the weakest side of the Athenians (2.1). It is possible that at that time no one had verbalized this aspect of the Athenian democracy and therefore the author himself, without referring to other critics, tackles the problem himself. The essence of the thesis is that according to the old system of values, the preference in the military sphere was given to the hoplites’ army, which embodied the *polis* itself and, at the same time, the aristocratic code of battle [Yaylenko 1983, p.171; Frolov 1988, p.118; Tumans 2002, p.179 f.; Nilsson 1929, p.245ff]. Consequently, the weakness of the Athenian hoplite’ army from the traditional point of view should be perceived as a problem of the entire political system [Murray 1982, p. 100; Tumans 2002, p. 124ff]. The antithesis offers the efficiency as an alternative value and proves that a powerful fleet gives Athens a military superiority over the allies and, in general, over land armies (2. 2–6).

In fact, in this place the text turns into a panegyric to the Athenian sea power, and then follows a lengthy description of material benefits received by the Athenian people from sea power (2. 7–13)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Here, where Athenian sea dominion is glorified, parallels with the funeral oration of Pericles at Thucydides are most obvious (Thuk. II, 38–39). See: [Romilly 1962, pp.225–241; Hornblower 2000, 369 ff].

6. Further we can see a derogation from the norm — the author does not put forward the next critical thesis and declares that the Athenians lack only one thing, namely that “they ruled over the sea, living on the island” (2. 14). At the same time it is explained that for the sea power an insular situation is ideal as it ensures the greatest safety (2. 14–15). It is clear that the continental location of Athens cannot be held against the political system of the state, but the author, obviously, decided to expand the subject and tackled not only the standard criticized, but all possible weaknesses. Keeping his own character, the author even here finds an argument in favor of the Athenians, because in this situation they behave reasonably, depositing their property to islands (2. 16).

7. The following subject runs contiguous to the previous one — here the thesis is not clearly formulated either; but the author is entering into explanations of a number of particular questions (2. 17–20). He shows in details that the *demos*, using the collective responsibility which turns into irresponsibility, are able to afford not to observe contracts and oaths, and also to shift the blame on predecessors or on an opposition. As it is from the very beginning opposed to oligarchical orders, the composition principle the “thesis/antithesis” in general is observed. In the course of a statement it becomes clear that such state of affairs is advantageous for the *demos*, and therefore the author repeats the departure position that the *demos* knows what is good for it and what is not, and on that basis the author gives preference to commoners before an unreliable noble (2. 19). The passage comes to the end with the statement that a decent aristocrat, without being a supporter of democracy, cannot remain in Athens, and the one who remains pursues criminal purposes, because he sees that “a swindler can more easily remain unnoticed in a democratic state, than in oligarchical one” (2. 20).

Here the problem of the author’s personal position is most clearly manifested. Apparently, he settles his point of reference when starting to talk about the *demos*. Usually he writes about it in the third person — “he”, “they”, “the Athenians”<sup>7</sup> and, moreover, characterizes the *demos* as an ignorant and gross mass (1. 5, 7). However, does this mean the author was a latent enemy of democracy or an emigrant [Ober 1999, p. 22]? Most likely, no, because in his work he only protects the *demos* and its power. At the end of this passage, he openly declares: “For my own part, I admit the democratic point of view for the *demos* itself, because everyone can care for himself” (2. 20). Here the author clearly distances himself from the *demos* and at the same time puts himself in its place, which is based on the principles of expediency and profit. This explains the inconsistency of the whole text and especially the last paragraphs of the second chapter (2. 17–19). The subjects described in this place are defiantly immoral, and the author, clearly not concealing this and obviously sharing a negative assessment of such phenomena from the point of view of traditional ethics, nevertheless recognizes for the people the right to take care of their own profit in the way that they seem necessary.

In this way, as a conclusion from the aforesaid it is possible to understand also the author’s statement at the beginning of a chapter 3: “So, as for the Athenian state system, of course, I do not approve it; but if they have decided to have a democratic rule, it seems to me, they keep democracy successfully, using the methods I have just mentioned”. These words are told by the aristocrat and he obviously opposes two systems of values, — old

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<sup>7</sup> It is revealing that usually, speaking about the Athenians in the third person, the author nevertheless once allowed the first plural form “we” (1. 12). See: [Ober 1999, p. 14].



aristocratic, not needing any justifications, and new, democratic, which he tackles to explain and to justify.

8. After such general statements it would be logical to finish, but the author continues the discussion and comes back to a former structure of his composition. The next thesis contains criticism of the functioning of The Council of Five Hundred and Athenian courts. The reproaches are the slowness of the Council's work (3. 1–2), its corruption (3. 3), and also an excessively large number of judges (3. 7). Answers are given according to the usual scheme, i.e. proceeding from the principle of reasonable practicality. It is explained that the Council just physically cannot work faster because of its availability; corruption is very cynically justified as a convenient means of resolving problems, with the comment that the Athenians could achieve even more, "if there were more people ready to give money" (3. 3). Then, on the contrary, the large number of judges are justified by the necessity to prevent corruption (3. 7). In fact, the author gives a positive estimation of council members' bribery as an effective way of solving problems, and bribery of judges negatively as perversion of justice. It seems that here there is no contradiction for him as he distinguishes reasonable practicality in bribery of a functionary and injustice in relation to an individual. For the author these facts are absolutely from different categories and therefore in relation to them the author applies different criteria, in fact, different systems of values.

It is remarkable that at the end of this part of the text the author summarizes his arguments, having reduced them to a common denominator: "Owing to this I do not find possible that in Athens affairs went differently, than now, unless only in something insignificant it is possible to throw out one, and to add another..." (3. 8). This conclusion returns him to the former distinction between advantage for the state and advantage for democracy — he states that for the political system improvement it is possible to think up a lot of things, but he does not know how to combine democracy with the best form of the power (3. 9). This is his well-known *aporia* — there is an understanding that the Athenian state could be well-developed, but there is no idea of what should be done for this purpose (the discussion of this *aporia* see [Ober 1999, 24f]). At the same time, the logic of all author's discourse inevitably brings us to the thought that the Athenian democracy is the best form of the power, because it turns out to be the most effective for the solution of the problems from the point of view of expediency.

9. And once again — after such serious conclusions it would be convenient to conclude his thesis, but the author starts to analyze some particulars again. He declares that he does not like the fact that in the cities where there is strife the Athenians support "the worst" (3. 10). But, as befits, he acquits the Athenians, explaining, both in general and with examples, that they are judicious in pursuing their own interests (3. 11).

10. Finally, in the last chapter the question of citizens who have been unfairly deprived of civil honor is discussed: at first, in an ironic form, on behalf of a critic is introduced the thesis that in Athens there are no such citizens at all, and the author seriously answers that there are such citizens, but not enough (3. 13). As the antithesis he adduces two arguments: firstly, he claims that in Athens the civil rights can be lost only for remiss course of duty, and also for dishonest speeches and actions; and secondly, he notices that as there are few people unfairly deprived of civil honor, nothing threatens the Athenian democracy from them (*ibid.*). Here quite unexpectedly, at first sight, "The Constitution of the Athenians" comes to an end. However, such ending is deliberate — the author has

already formulated all general conclusions above, showing once again the prudence of the Athenian political system and illustrating with a concrete example that there are no conditions for a change of this system in Athens.

Now, coming back to the purposes of creating *The Constitution of the Athenians*, it seems quite obvious that such a composition structure, in which the positive antithesis is opposed to each negative thesis, is absolutely unsuitable for criticism and can be used only for apologia. Thus, the structural analysis of the text convinces of the fact that the main author's purpose is to reply to the criticism of Athenian democracy, which he does successively, considering not only the arguments of the opposition, but all the weaknesses of Athenian state in general [Herrmann-Otto 1996, p. 140]. It is revealing that he adduces critical passages most often with neutral phrases which only describe the undisputable state of affairs (1. 10, 13, 14; 2. 1, 14, 17). In other cases the author refers to certain critics of democracy and then the thesis is introduced by a phrase, such as: "some are surprised..." (ἐνιοὶ θαυμάζουσιν — 1. 4. 1), "some reproach" (τιναὶ ὀφρω' μεμφομεῶν σου ζἈθηναίου' — 3. 1. 5), or "according to some" (δοκεῖ δέ; —1. 16.1). Thereby he obviously separates from their opinion, and then gives the answer. At last, he expresses his own critical opinion only three times: he repeats twice the same thought that he does not approve a state system of the Athenians, but at the same time right there acquits it with the interests of the demos and emphasizes that the Athenians successfully maintain the regime (1. 1; 3. 1). For the third time he condemns the Athenians for the fact that they side up with "the worst" in other states (3. 10), and this censure has an utter aristocratic character. But he also disallows the charge, having shown that in this case the *demos* sees reason in advocating their interests. These three phrases could be the only basis to ascribe an antidemocratic position to Pseudo-Xenophon if he did not respond to his theses with antitheses justifying the policy of democracy. Moreover, he accepted the right of the demos to defend its interests (2. 20) and stated that the demos did it extremely successfully and rationally. As a result, Athenian democracy, put in a context of pragmatism, becomes in his statement if not the perfect political form, but quite self-sufficient, internally accomplished and viable, which matches the highest criteria in this system of values.

So, it is already possible to draw some conclusions on the basis of the analysis we have done. Firstly, the text is integral and despite some literary errors and digressions from the composite principles, it is well structured by the principle: "the thesis — the antithesis". Secondly, it seems that there is one author of the text. The latter is characterized by the harmony of thoughts and the sequence of narration, so, despite some composition problems, the author surprisingly purposefully advances the main ideas through all the text, making orderly transitions from one subject to another. Thirdly, the author obviously belongs to aristocratic estate, but at the same time shows the new mindset. In part, it is possible to agree with the statement that he combines two systems of values [Nakategawa, 1995, p.39]. On the one hand, he shares an old morally-ethical code of the aristocracy [Herrmann-Otto 1996, pp.136, 138], and on the other hand, he rejects this code in the sphere of practical activities, choosing the ideology of pragmatism and expediency. Moreover, proceeding from ideas of benefit and efficiency as the highest criteria in judgments about the state, he took the side of the *demos* and wrote an apologia of Athenian democracy. In this system of values democracy is shown as an extremely expediently organized form of governance, which guarantees the greatest possible protection of their interests. It was already noticed that *Athenaion Politeia* contained a functional analysis of Athenian

democracy irrespective of moral evaluation [Mann 2008, p. 12]. Yet, in that case it is hard to view the given text as an “anti-democratic tractate” [Mann 2008, p. 8] since the criticism of Athenian democracy was then given from the point of view of the aristocratic system of morals.

Thus, in the world view of Pseudo-Xenophon, the moral aspect was replaced by pragmatism, thanks to what democracy got value for in itself, without reference to ethical categories; one can say, it became a political fetish, the supreme value. Consequently, all the rest became subordinated to its interests, so it became possible to justify everything that was done for the benefit of democracy. It is necessary to recognize that this ideology looks modern even nowadays, so it is quite realistic.

At the same time, Pseudo-Xenophon’s radicalism of the ideology of pragmatism should not confuse us. We can find a great number of examples of such ideology in Thucydides just in the speeches of the Athenians. As a rule, in these speeches the Athenians justify their acts by the rule of force and by their own benefit, in the face of which they openly renounce the postulates of the right and justice without hesitating (Thuc., I, 76, 2–3; III, 44, 1, 4; V, 89, 2 seq; 90, 1; 91, 2)<sup>8</sup>. There are reasons to suppose that such pragmatic ideology, cleared of morals and ethics, was what really dominated in democratic Athens, and therefore Xenophon’s composition is only a reflection of it. Of course, we cannot be entirely sure that the author of *The Constitution of the Athenians* really thought so as he wrote, but that we will never know. However, for us it is important to know what ideology is included in his work.

### 3

It is possible to check the conclusions with the assistance of cultural–historical context. It is necessary to notice that some researchers have already worked in this field. In their works are studied various aspects of the historical environment which surrounded the author of *The Constitution of the Athenians* while he was writing it [Raaflaub 1985; Raaflaub 1989; Roberts 1994; Ober, 1999]. For example, J. Ober investigated a literary context in details [Ober 1999], and K. Raaflaub the political and historical one [Raaflaub 1992; see also: Heftner 2003]. It is interesting to compare some of their observations. Ober notes that Pseudo-Xenophon’s work had opened the tradition of literary criticism of Athenian democracy, but nevertheless it had no direct receptions in literature [Ober 1999, pp. 15, 27]. In turn, Raaflaub asks the question: why were there no constructive debates on democracy in Athens; i.e. why there was no open discussion about its problematic points and offers on its improvement? And he answers the question: it was so because democracy and its critics had no common grounds — the opposition did not criticize some aspects of democracy and generally denied it as a vicious system [Raaflaub 1992, p.21]. In my opinion, this observation explains well both Pseudo-Xenophon’s uniqueness and his lack of his adherents. It is necessary to make at least a fluent review of literary criticism of democracy in that period of time to estimate completely the uniqueness of our text. Furthermore, it has to be added that in the 5th century B. C. there was only personal criticism of democra-

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<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, the most indicative are the words of Diodotus: “We, however... have to reason here not about justice, but about how it is more useful to us to act with us in our interests” (Thuc., III, 44, 4). Cynical refusal of justice for profit is a perfect example of new, pragmatism type of thought in democratic Athens. Pseudo-Xenophon is nothing near so cynical.

cy since there were no alternative governing systems yet [Heftner 2003, p. 8; Blösel 2000, p. 87]. For this purpose a few examples will be enough from the works of those authors who expressed this criticism most distinctively<sup>9</sup>.

Socrates was one of the first and, undoubtedly, the greatest critics of democracy. As judged by “Memorabilia” of Xenophon, he criticized the Athenian political system for officials’ and politicians’ moral decay (III. 5. 16 seq), greed and corruption (II. 6. 24; III. 5. 16), but the main thing was that he denied the principle of democratic equality: “It is silly to choose the officials using beans, whereas nobody wants to have a helmsman, a carpenter, a flutist, or someone else, chosen by beans; mistakes in such work bring much less harm, than mistakes in the state activity” (I. 2. 9).

In his opinion, not those who are elected by a lot must govern the state, but those, “who are able to govern” (III. 9. 10). At last, in the conversation with Pericles the Younger he replied to the question, what should to be done to improve the situation: “... to find out what orders our ancestors had and to observe them similarly strictly...” (III. 5. 14). It is clear that it would mean the elimination of democracy and return to aristocratic republic.

It is easy to find the similar tendency in Aristophanes’s comedies as well. One can often find there the statements blaming moral decay (Vesp., 1091 sqq), greed and corruption (Plut., 567 sqq), and, of course, the judgement that absolutely useless people come to the power in Athens (Equit., 238 sqq, 764 sqq). Aristophanes’s ideal was in the past, in the era of aristocratic republic, when the generation of heroes of the Battle of Marathon lived in Athens. For this reason the safe ending in the comedy “The Knights” comes when the Demos is boiled in a pot and gives back a youth of the period of the Battle of Marathon (Equit., 1352–1372).

Isocrates looks at things in a similar vein: he condemns moral degradation (*De pace*, 41–48), the power of bad men (*De pace*, 13; 52 seq., 122), he considers sea dominion of Athens the reason of all troubles (*De pace*, 64; 74), and at last, calls for return to the political system of Solon and Cleisthenes times, i.e. to the aristocratic republic (Areop., 16 sq).

It is known that Plato was the most dogged critic of Athenian democracy. He considered the education of virtues in citizens the main purpose of the state (Leg., 630 with — 632a), and, estimating democracy from these positions, he characterized it quite negatively — as the political system which destroys virtue and encourages defects (Gorg., 519a; Resp., 557 b–c; 559d; Leg., 831d; 916e; 917a). He thought that political order in Athens during the era of Persian wars, i.e. before democracy, was rather good (Leg., 698b). After his teacher he blamed the democracy for placing the bad men in power (Resp., 558c; Prot., 319d; Polit., 291e; 303 c; 363d) and considered that the best men have to govern; on this basis he created the project of the ideal state with wise philosophers in power.

For illustrative purposes these examples are quite enough, as they provide visual imagery the justice of the Raaflaub’s thesis that the real critics of democracy, i.e. so-called “oligarchs”, mentioned not the separate drawbacks of the system, but completely denied it at all. Even on the example of this selective and extremely fluent summary of opinions it is easy to mark the main claims to democracy. Fundamentally, all criticism is reduced to two points: firstly, the fact that bad men came to the power in Athens is not accepted, while the “kind” are sidelined (by the way, it is significant that Pseudo-Xenophon begins his

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<sup>9</sup> In this context the criticism of democracy is the criticism of its system, not of its defects. Proceeding from it the following selection of authors has been made.

work with this, the main charge)<sup>10</sup>; secondly, the moral decay conditioned by the vicious political system is condemned. As we see, the denial of democracy is based on concepts of moral code. Basically, it is clear, that both of charges are of fundamental nature which mention the bases of the democratic state and therefore here nothing could be changed without changing the state system. Consequently, the opposition denied this system, so a dialogue with it was impossible. In fact, the overall picture was not that clear-cut: H. Heftner clearly showed that during the 5th century B. C there were two anti-democratic thought movements. One of them rejected democracy entirely, the other one was searching for compromises in the framework of a democratic system, and was not against the system itself rather just individual political trends [Heftner 2003, 5f, 7f, 38f]. The first group has been reflected more in literature, since the other one took active participation in politics and was less troubled with theory. Thus, when seeing criticism of Athenian democracy in the text of Pseudo-Xenophon, it should be included in the second group of critics. Although that is rather hypothetical.

If we look at the Pseudo-Xenophon's work in this context, then two aspects become obvious. At first, his author is united with critics of democracy as he states disapproval of the Athenian political system where the *demos* lives better than the nobles (1. 1). At the second, he is standing in marked contrast with the real critics in giving the Athenian people the credit for arranging the affairs as it seems to them rational (1. 8; 2. 20), he also estimates the policy of the *demos* proceeding from its efficiency, but not from moral categories. Thus, in fact he rejects aristocratic criteria and justifies democracy. Even if he criticizes it, then not the political system, but only some shortcomings, always finding justification<sup>11</sup>. In my opinion, the most important thing is that Pseudo-Xenophon refused of moral criteria in discussion about the state system of the Athenians depriving all the system of criticism of the arguments. He took the position of extreme pragmatism, and from this point of view it became possible to justify both the power of "bad" and corruption. Such approach allows discussing only some details which could be improved on.

Altogether, there is an impression that the author of *The Constitution of the Athenians* tries to adopt a position of neutrality between the Athenian people and aristocratic critics — he distances himself and, like Solon, gives both of them a credit for a piece of truth. But as always, practically an either party becomes more correct and right. In this particular case, the *demos* is more right, because the author takes its side and shared its values. The fact that we find oligarchic political views in *Athenaion Politeia* does not mean they are the worldview basis of the whole text [Prestel 1937, p. 86]. Apparently this text includes polemics, but one that defends the Athenian political system from criticism of its opponents. Therefore, it is possible to claim that actually this text represents an apology of democracy, which determines the lack of analogues of such "criticism" in literature of that period.

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<sup>10</sup> The fact that at first democracy had the leaders of an aristocratic origin does not change the heart of the matter, since in the opinion of opposition the *demos* was divided into "bad" and "kind", first of all by their moral qualities. Therefore it is logical that the aristocrats who took the side of democracy were perceived by them rather as apostates than as "kind". But even the exceptions like Pericles could not affect the negative attitude of critics towards democracy. So, for example, the recognition of Pericles's political talent (Plat., *Alkyb.* I, 118c) did not impede Plato from estimating the results of his policies negatively (*Gorg.*, 519 a) and to reject democracy.

<sup>11</sup> In this sense he can be compared with Aristotle who accepted democracy in general as the majority rule (*Arist. Pol.*, 1281 a 40), but criticized its shortcomings (*Arist. Pol.*, 1310a 25 sqq; 1304b 20 sq; 1310a 3).

The main paradox of *The Constitution of the Athenians* consists of the fact that its author managed to unite in his personality or in his work two opposite positions, — positions of the critic and of the apologist of the Athenian democracy. This is the main riddle of this work. Nevertheless, this riddle is not as inexplicable as it might seem at first sight. Firstly, the analysis we have done shows not only that the structure of the text rises to the aims of apology of democracy, but also the major part of the text is devoted to a justification of the criticized aspects of democratic governance. Therefore, in view of ideological dichotomy, in *The Constitution of the Athenians* the general ideological bent of the author is rather clearly traced. Secondly, this work integrates perfectly into the context of sophistical rhetoric and symposium literature of that period of time, because within both of these genres the author could be in turn on the opposite ends<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, it is not improbable that in one person's consciousness in that period of time two ideologies — the old aristocratic system of values based on ethical postulates and the new democratic ideology based on the principles of pragmatism could really collide. Naturally, in this situation national mentality and patriotism led to the victory of a new ideology, which, in my opinion, *The Constitution of the Athenians* demonstrates. From the historical experience it is well aware that the interests of the state if they are put in the first place, overcome morality rather easily, and then it is possible to justify anything by these interests. Therefore, it is not improbable that in the person Pseudo-Xenophon we have the first antique Machiavelli...

Now, answering the question raised in the title, I have to conclude that I have no reason to subsume Pseudo-Xenophon neither under “young people”, nor under “old”, nor in general under an oligarch, but he is rather a democrat of aristocratic, or perhaps oligarchical, origin. As I am referring to a system of thought, one can say that a democrat or oligarch cannot be born, a democrat or oligarch has to be made.

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<sup>12</sup> In some sense Plato's dialogues represent it too, because their author with ingenious smarts represented positions of both Socrates and his opponents, sometimes even combining them in one person. It is clearly evident in the dialogue “Charmides”, where the young Charmides gives mutually exclusive definitions of judiciousness under Socrates' supervision.

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