Histos 13 (2019) 129–45

THE ARISTOTELIAN *ATHENAION POLITEIA* AS 'POOR HISTORY'? HISTORIOGRAPHY, RHETORIC, AND THE CONTROVERSIES ABOUT SOLON IN THE FOURTH CENTURY*

Abstract: This article examines the kind of historiographical thought that the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* reveals in its use of sources, especially in chapters 2–17, which deal with Solon's political activity. It confronts the scholarly view of the *Athenaion Politeia* as poor history and argues that its historical reasoning employs the same kind of rhetorical argumentation that would have been acceptable in the intellectual context of fourth-century Greek historiography.

Keywords: ancient historiography, rhetoric, Solon, Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*

1. Introduction

The historical thought and methodology of the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* have received some attention over the years in studies often linked to the debate over its authorship.[1] For those who ascribed the *Ath. Pol.* to Aristotle, his ideas about history as less philosophical and serious than poetry (*Poetics* 1451b),[2] as well as presumed contradictions within the text or with other works,[3] reaffirmed the absence in the work of historical accuracy and original research.[4] Even when scholars thought otherwise and the value of Aristotle's history was acknowledged, the *Ath. Pol.* was often dismissed as not being a proper historiographical work. I include here the explicit beliefs of

* I am grateful to Francisco Marshall, Jose Carlos Baracat Junior, and Delfim Ferreira Leão for their help at different stages of this investigation, and to the institutions which supported it: CNPq (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico), UFRGS (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul), and UFRB (Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia). I also would like to say thank you to the anonymous readers of *Histos* and to the Managing Editor, John Marincola, for helping me to considerably refine and improve my argument and text.

[1] Scholars have come to agree that the text was produced by the Peripatetic school when Aristotle was still alive: see Rhodes (1992) 61–3 and Keaney (1992) 5–19.

[2] For discussion of the topic see Weil (1960) 163–178, Boulay (2005) and Bertelli (2014).

[3] The presumed contradiction within the text is discussed by Keaney (1969) 412–5. For disagreements with the *Politics*, see Ste. Croix (2004) 273–7, Rhodes (1992) 58–61, and Pires (1999) 392–405.

[4] Cf. Huxley (1973) 271–86.

ISSN: 2046-5963 12 July 2019

those who have held that Aristotle had no interest in historical research,[5] those who ascribed to him an uncritical use of sources,[6] and even those who have maintained the idea that the *Ath. Pol.* was written to exemplify early doctrines of political theory.[7]

Ath. Pol. 2–17 offers us a defence of Solon's reputation by refuting defamatory accounts of his political activities. So what can these historiographical polemics teach us about the methodology of the work? The main objective here is to determine what kinds of historiographical thought the *Ath. Pol.* reveals in its use of sources in the chapters that deal with the controversies about Solon without considering it 'poor history'. First, I will present some conclusions by modern scholars about the role of written sources in composing the work, and the influence of Aristotelian theories on it. Then I will address the acceptance or rejection of traditions by the work using a set of ideas provided by the *Rhetoric*. Finally, I propose to test a hypothesis about Solon's role within the narrative as an ethical example of a statesman whose reputation is defended with the use of reasoning and vocabulary shared by courtroom language and historiographical polemics. The *Ath. Pol.*'s author defends his views about Solon because he found in his poetry an authoritative source and a good example of moderate political thought and action.

2. The *Athenaion Politeia* and its Sources: the Historiography

More than one hundred years ago, G. Mathieu considered how Aristotle relied on different sources with divergent biases about Athenian history, and how writing the first half of the *Ath. Pol.* would have led to him attempting to solve these conflicts.[8] Sometimes the author referred to external evidence that could illuminate the past, like the institutions that still existed in his own age. When that method was not enough to solve the disagreement, he did not choose one of his sources but instead tried to settle the dispute or to combine both versions of the past. When the stories were completely contradictory, the attempt to reconcile them could not erase the traces of this conflict. According to

[5] E.g., Cauer (1891), discussed by Day and Chambers (1962) 28–30; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1893) 373; Jacoby (1949) 210; Hignett (1958) 29. Rhodes (1992) 29 notes that if the author of the *Ath. Pol.* 'did not engage in original historical research, his value to the modern historian lies in what he preserves of material that is now lost, and in what he shows of the way in which a fourth-century writer tried to reconcile conflicting sources and to solve historical problems'; cf. ibid. 60: 'as a historian [he] is mediocre (though by no means useless to us)'. Rhodes is right describing the usefulness of *Ath. Pol.* to a modern historian of early Athens; nonetheless, the words above also portray it as 'poor history'.

[6] Mathieu (1915) 1–27 and Mossé (1979) 425–37.

[7] Day and Chambers (1962) 25–71.

[8] Mathieu (1915) 1–27.

Mathieu, that is why the text presents readers with so many contradictions, which in turn encourages the view that its author was a poor historian.

Mathieu mentions several contaminations from different sources in different parts of the *Ath. Pol.*, but regarding Solon he admits Aristotle's preference for the 'moderate' version, and he attributes this to Aristotle's sympathy for a moderate democracy. Those sources had been correlated by modern scholars with fragments from the Atthidographers and classified as 'oligarchic', 'moderate', and 'radically democratic'. That view led researchers to see echoes of different *Atthides* where any polemic or strong opinion appeared in the text, especially from Androtion's work, which some believed was the *Ath. Pol.*'s main source.[9] P. Harding demonstrated the circularity of this argument, since most of the passages cited as evidence of political bias from the Atthidographers, especially that of Androtion and Kleidemos, come from the *Ath. Pol.* itself.[10] Aristotle consulted different writers when composing the constitutions, but if the *Ath. Pol.* sometimes quotes and dismisses versions with which it does not agree, it is necessary to conclude that when it uses a source without disagreement, it endorses or ignores any political bias within that source. So, then, we should avoid the 'poor history' approach and consider whether the *Ath. Pol.* critically evaluates the reliability and biases of its sources in accordance with standards of ancient historiography.[11]

In addition, C. Mossé, discussing the *Ath. Pol.*'s dependence on second-hand sources, argued that the Solonian reforms described by the work were a 'mythe politique', designed to make Solon the father of the moderate democracy idealised by fourth-century orators.[12] Solon and other leaders of early Athens were often used as rhetorical tools in the context of the debate over the *patrios politeia* and its idealisation of the past.[13] Harding's assertions, however, compel us to see in such struggles over collective memory[14] a debate

[9] Rhodes (1992) 17–22 and Ste. Croix (2004) 303.

[10] Harding (1977) 148–60.

[11] What Sacks (1996) 213–14 has said about Diodorus' *Bibliotheke* could be applied to the *Ath. Pol.*: 'Sensitive to its many factual errors and chronological blunders, scholars continually mined the *Bibliotheke* in the hopes of uncovering individual strata and attributing them to various sources […] for the most part the corresponding narratives of the original sources are no longer extant, so that there are few controls, direct or indirect, over how much thematic material Diodorus has borrowed from his sources. Indeed, once the belief in Diodorus' incompetence is put aside, it is easy to establish his authorship on important concepts in the *Bibliotheke*'.

[12] Mossé (1979) 425–37 and Hansen (1999) 297–300.

[13] Finley (1975) 35–65; Leão (2001) 43–72; Clarke (2008) 274–86; Atack (2010) 1–33.

[14] Social memory and political power are relevant to understanding ancient historiography and its uses. See Shrimpton (1997), Hornblower (1996) 10–12, Marincola (1997) 158–74, and Clarke (2008) 313–18.

in which the Aristotelian school has its own ideas, and does not simply and ingenuously repeat the oratorical tradition concerning the *patrios politeia*. That means both acknowledging that the *Ath. Pol.*'s author made deliberate choices when selecting and judging his sources, as well as establishing his own views and biases toward Athenian history and contemporary political conflicts.

Since it happens that the *Ath. Pol.*'s author is from the Aristotelian school, any political bias and attitude towards historical methodology should be sought within its philosophical works. J. Day and M. Chambers argued that the *Politics* and *Metaphysics* provided the governing ideas of the *Ath. Pol.*, especially about the stages of democratic government.[15] P. J. Rhodes, however, among others, was right in saying that these subtle traces of Aristotelian theory are not convincing,[16] and that the author would explicitly make connections with Aristotelian ideas whenever he really wanted to. Yet this does not mean those connections don't exist. We know from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1181b15–22) that the collecting of constitutions was connected to the *Politics*, but to assume ideas about governance in the *Ath. Pol.* is to assume a direct relationship between historical research and political theory in Aristotelian philosophy such that the former was only made to confirm the latter.

G. Huxley[17] also criticised Day and Chambers by proposing that Aristotle changed his mind about the order of constitutional changes as soon as he got more evidence from the collected constitutions.[18] Instead of showing how the *Ath. Pol.* was, as Day and Chambers held, 'written after the *Politics* with the aim of showing how Athenian history exemplified doctrines of political theory',[19] Huxley suggested that it would be better to ask how all that historical data influenced Aristotle's political philosophy. If Aristotle and his school engaged in such colossal research concerning many constitutions, some of which were possibly done earlier, while others later, than the *Politics*, it is hard to believe that it was only a way of exemplifying theories stated before the historical research was actually done, and even harder to believe that all that collected data had no or few influences on those early theories.

[15] Day and Chambers (1962) 25–71.

[16] Rhodes (1992) 10–13.

[17] See Huxley (1972) 161–8 on *EN* 1160b and *Pol.* 1316a, although Huxley's conclusions (165) about Aristotle's skills in interpreting oral and written vestiges from the past are excessively optimistic: 'One may regret that Aristotle did not live in an age of scientific excavation, because he possessed in full measure the true archaeologist's ability to make inferences from physical objects'.

[18] Huxley (1972) 158–9; at 163 he argues that the constitutions were researched while the *Politics* was composed, so that the constitutions influenced only *Politics* 4–6. For more detailed discussion about the dating of the *Ath. Pol.* see Keaney (1970) 335–6 and Rhodes (1992) 58–9.

[19] Day and Chambers (1962) 70.

In the eighties, D. L. Blank[20] also established links between Aristotelian philosophy (especially *Top.* 100b21–33) and the *Ath. Pol.* concerning its historical methodology, but he only improved and explored ideas similar to those presented by G. Mathieu almost a hundred years before. Blank claimed that Aristotle's treatment of sources was dialectical, meaning that Aristotle always respected the opinion of a predecessor unless it conflicted with something he was quite certain about. When conflict occurs, a less respectable source may be reconciled with the most trustworthy version or may be 'rationalised', which means that Aristotle will have altered at will the text of the source to make it sound trustworthy. Blank's ideas, in contrast with Mathieu's, have the advantage of acknowledging a more intrusive author for the *Ath. Pol.* concerning the use and interpretation of sources.

Huxley, Harding, and Blank, then, confronted the view that the *Ath. Pol.* was poor history which followed second-hand sources without further research.[21] The use of second-hand sources was the expected methodology for a fourth-century historian dealing with a non-contemporary subject and Ste. Croix noted that there is no conclusive evidence that any Greek historian before Aristotle had ever done any systematic research using archives or other documents.[22] The Aristotelian school, therefore, produced in the *Ath. Pol.* an ancient 'historiographical' work whose major methodological issue in the historical section at least, was how to deal with the tradition. Among these traditions the *Ath. Pol.* found controversies about Solon, and solving this contradictory evidence was, therefore, one of its tasks. Obviously, the poetry ascribed to Solon was one of the main sources that had to be considered, and relying on poetry in historical polemics was not new to Greek historiography.[23] Solonian poetry also provided good insights into moderate political thinking and action of the sort that Aristotle found useful and quoted in the *Politics* as well.[24] So preserving Solon's reputation was indeed relevant for an Aristotelian author.

3. The *Athenaion Politeia* and Rhetoric

Well then, what kind of historical thought does the *Ath. Pol.* reveal in dealing with Solon's controversies? In contrast with Blank's view about dialectical

[20] Blank (1984) 279–81.

[21] See above, n. 5 for references.

[22] Ste. Croix (2004) 281–307.

[23] Fourth-century historians such as Ephorus relied on poetry even to correct early historians: Flower (1998); for discussion see Schepens (2007) 50–52 and Parmeggiani (2011) 645–6.

[24] Gehrke (2006) 276–88.

reasoning in the *Ath. Pol.,* ancient writers often regarded history as a branch of rhetoric. Aristotle (*Rh.* 1354a 1–6) stressed the difference between dialectic and rhetoric: the former is concerned with upholding an argument (ὑπέχειν λόγον), whereas the latter is concerned with defending oneself and attacking others (ἀπολογεῖσθαι καὶ κατηγορεῖν). The *Ath. Pol.* employs rhetorical reasoning and the language of the courtroom to defend Solon's reputation. These polemics, which are often noted by scholars as derived from biased and/or contradictory sources, would have been the techniques by which the *Ath. Pol.* judged and then rejected or accepted previous traditions about Solon.[25] I will now consider the courtroom language and the rhetorical reasoning used to defend the ethical example embodied by Solon in the narrative.

Rhetoric implies a contest. The *Ath. Pol.*'s author did not always search for evidence to correct the contradictions and incoherencies in his sources, but about Solon he cared enough to engage with the historical controversy. In a passage about the chronology concerning Solon, the *Ath. Pol.* states only that the difference between the two versions is minimal (3.3). In two other passages the *Ath. Pol.* mentions discrepant accounts without deciding which one is the most trustworthy (14.4, 17.4), and these remind us of Herodotus when he tells what he has heard but adds that he does not necessarily believe it (e.g., Hdt. 2.122 and 7.152). Other ancient historians who wrote non-contemporary histories were likewise not always concerned about correcting errors in previous inquiries but only about noting them and showing themselves aware of the difficulties in the tradition.[26] It is worthwhile, then, to consider exactly what kind of source conflict demanded that the *Ath. Pol.* enter the controversy.

When describing the social classes established by Solon, the *Ath. Pol.* (7.4) mentions that some say (ἔνιοί φασι) that the members of the cavalry class were so named because of their ability to own and keep a horse, and those who say this point to an inscription on the Acropolis as evidence (σημεῖον). Even so, the author dismisses that evidence, saying that it is more reasonable (εὐλογώτερον) to believe that the cavalry class was distinguished by its wealth and so would not diverge from the *pentacosiomedimnoi* class. The *Ath. Pol.* only bothers to mention and refute evidence from a rejected source to attack views that endanger the coherence of the whole narrative, since the *pentacosiomedimnoi* class could not be a contemporary of the *hippeis* unless they had the same criteria of measured wealth.[27] So we see here that achieving accuracy through rhetorical confrontation was only a concern if a contradictory account needed to be rejected or accepted for a specific reason.

[25] On historiographical polemic see Shrimpton (1997) 178–80; Marincola (1997) 218–36.

[26] Marincola (1997) 262–3.

[27] Ste. Croix (2004) 30–32 and 70–71 believes that Aristotle was misled by the absence of a Solonian law about the criteria for the social classes.

This being the case, I will argue below that in the controversies about Solon the *Ath. Pol.* uses enthymemes to defend him against slanders and to preserve his reputation as an ethical lawgiver and statesman. By enthymemes I mean not a philosophical problem but rather the rhetorical syllogisms which must present premises and a conclusion with the aim of persuading the audience in the matter of a human action. Aristotle says that an enthymeme is a rhetorical syllogism while an example is a rhetorical induction (*Rhet.* 1356 4–6), such that examples are appropriate to deliberative discourse, while enthymemes belong to judicial trials, since the former are concerned with the future and draw examples from the past, while the latter are concerned with 'what is' or 'is not', which requires demonstration (*Rhet.* 1418a 1–5).

The definition and role of enthymemes in Aristotle's theory of discourse is a debated question which I must leave aside. I follow A. C. Braet[28] who describes three properties which Aristotle ascribes to these rhetorical syllogisms. First, enthymemes deal with largely non-necessary matters, namely human actions, and for this reason are derived from probability (*εἰκός*) and sign (*σημεῖον*). Second, the concise formulation of enthymemes is used for the benefit of an uneducated audience, in opposition to the more formal dialectical syllogisms for the educated. Finally, enthymemes are syllogisms that refer to common topics, that is, topics known by the audience. All these properties are suited to the polemical arguments about Solon employed by the *Ath. Pol.*

I will also indicate the premises and conclusion which the *Ath. Pol.* employs to persuade the audience of Solon's reputation as well as noting the courtroom language and the techniques of persuasion shared by the *Ath. Pol.* and the *Rhetoric*, especially the use of words such as *σημεῖον*, *τεκμήριον*, *εἰκός*, *παράδειγμα*, and *μαρτυρία*.[29] The historical polemics appear in the text because they were demanded in order to deal with conflicting traditions; they were not necessarily required by historical accuracy but rather by a contemporary dispute about the past. When the *Ath. Pol.* engages in polemics, it is arguing against a previous writer or tradition through rhetorical demonstration, and in so doing the author avoids the narrative/descriptive style and adopts a more judicial tone. As stated before, we cannot always presume that he was simply employing the polemics found in his sources, nor can we affirm that these controversies were intended to improve historical accuracy. They were similar to contemporary rhetorical contests in which social memory and its ethical implications were the main concern. At least in recounting the stories about Solon, the *Ath. Pol.* was orientated towards producing a useful and ethical

[28] Braet (1999) 103–4.

[29] Rhodes has already noted the use of this vocabulary when the work deals with different traditions: see Rhodes (1992) 25–7. See also *Rh.* 1357a31–32, 1402b13–14, and Braet (1999) 108–11.

example from the past,[30] and rhetorical refutations were necessary only when alternative traditions endangered the coherence of the ethical example that the *Ath. Pol.* tried to extract from its narrative about Solon.

4. Solon's 'Trial'

The *Ath. Pol.*'s author found traditions that accused Solon of unethical governance, so he needed to deal with them in order to preserve Solon as a positive historical example. Solon's role in the narrative, I suggest here, serves as an ethical example of a statesman but it also represents him as an accused citizen in a public trial. I shall first explain the latter and then proceed to show how the defence of Solon's integrity was imperative in preserving him as a model of ethical and political virtue and moderation.

The first controversy appears at *Ath. Pol.* 6.2, which mentions that some people tried to slander (διαβάλλειν) Solon in the following way. When he was about to make the σεισάχθεια, the debt relief that protected Athenians from slavery, Solon told some wealthy men in advance about his intention of cancelling debts. The narrative then splits into two conflicting versions: (a) the popular one (οἱ δημοτικοὶ λέγουσι), which states that Solon was manipulated by his friends; and (b) the defamatory one (οἱ βουλόμενοι βλασφημεῖν), which states that Solon himself actually participated in the scheme. After the presentation of the accusers and defendants comes the accusation: those friends of Solon acquired a great deal of land with borrowed money and then became rich after the cancellation of debts.

To defend Solon (but not his friends) from the accusation, the *Ath. Pol.* offers us a long and complicated argument (6.3–4):

> οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ πιθανώτερος ὁ τῶν δημοτικῶν λόγος· οὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις οὕτω μέτριον γενέσθαι καὶ κοινόν, ὥστ' ἐξὸν αὐτῷ τοὺς ἑτέρους ὑποποιησάμενον τυραννεῖν τῆς πόλεως, ἀμφοτέροις ἀπεχθέσθαι καὶ περὶ πλείονος ποιήσασθαι τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὴν τῆς πόλεως σωτηρίαν ἢ τὴν αὐτοῦ πλεονεξίαν, ἐν οὕτω δὲ μικροῖς καὶ ἀναξίοις καταρρυπαίνειν ἑαυτόν. [4] ὅτι δὲ ταύτην ἔσχε τὴν ἐξουσίαν, τά τε πράγματα νοσοῦντα μαρτυρεῖ, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν αὐτὸς πολλαχοῦ μέμνηται, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι συνομολογοῦσι πάντες. ταύτην μὲν οὖν χρὴ νομίζειν ψευδῆ τὴν αἰτίαν εἶναι.
>
> However, the democratic version of the story is more credible. Solon was so moderate and impartial in other respects that, when he could have got the rest of the people into his power and made himself tyrant

[30] See Gehrke (2006) 276–8 who treats the similarities between the *Ath. Pol.* and the *Politics* in portraying Solon as a good example of statesman and lawgiver.

> over the city, he instead accepted the hatred of both sides and set a higher value on honour and the safety of the city than on his own advantage; so it is not plausible that he should have defiled himself in so petty and easily detected a matter. [4] That he had the opportunity to become a tyrant is evident from the diseased state of affairs: he frequently mentions it in his poetry, and everyone else agrees. The accusation that he joined in the scheme must therefore be judged false.[31]

If we wish to state this in terms of the premises and conclusion and stressing the vocabulary from judicial rhetoric, we may analyse it as follows. The popular version is more credible (*πιθανώτερος*) because it is not plausible (*οὐ γὰρ εἰκός*) that a man who was once so moderate and impartial (6.3.1–2, the first and more general premise) would not behave in the same way as regards the *σεισάχθεια* (the unsaid conclusion, passage 6.4.1–2 means literally that he would not get himself dirty in small and unworthy matters). Between these two we have the second and more specific premise that confirms Solon's impartiality and moderation: he could have subjugated one of the factions and become tyrant of the city, but he chose not to do this, and instead became hated by both sides, even as he worked for the good and the preservation of the city, instead of for his own gain. If the 'defence' starts with a weak statement (*οὐ γὰρ εἰκός*) for the first premise, the argumentation is bolstered in the second premise by repeated emphasis on Solon's refusal to become a tyrant: the troubled circumstances bear witness (*μαρτυρεῖ*) that he could have seized power, and he himself frequently mentions it in his poetry, and everyone else agrees. If such are the premises and they are so well known, the conclusion must be a strong verdict in Solon's favour (*ταύτην μὲν οὖν χρὴ νομίζειν ψευδῆ τὴν αἰτίαν εἶναι*).

We should understand this long and unusual reasoning in the *Ath. Pol.* as a clear attempt to save Solon's reputation. It tries to defend him in the same way that one would defend oneself in the courtroom for a wider audience. Both rhetorical persuasion and historical accuracy are at issue, and the author employs an enthymeme while selecting the best version to preserve Solon's reputation. The *Ath. Pol.* does not try to verify whether Solon's friends actually became rich through the scheme, but instead states that Solon could not have participated in such a scheme due to his good character. Only the second and specific premise is authenticated by historical proof: Solon's refusal of tyranny was confirmed by the circumstances, by his poems, and by tradition, so he ought therefore to be credited with moderation in the *seisachtheia* as well. This approach to sources made here by the *Ath. Pol.* follows criteria similar to those which J. Marincola has noted in the wider context of ancient historiography,

[31] English translation by Rhodes (2002).

where appeals are made to the oldest witnesses, the greater number of witnesses, the 'more reliable' witnesses, the 'more persuasive' account, and so on.[32] Solon's poems are the oldest version, the most accepted one, and the most persuasive; and finally one appeals as well to Solon's own character, as it can be reconstructed from other uncontroversial actions. The *Ath. Pol.*, then, combines an approach towards 'historical' sources and a type of rhetorical argumentation typical of ancient historiography.

This enthymeme and this selection of sources were very likely an original contribution by the *Ath. Pol.* in dealing with this conflicting tradition.[33] The omission of the names of Solon's friends involved in the scheme should cause no concern, even if Plutarch centuries later mentions them (*Sol.* 15.7–9), thereby indicating that they were very likely known by *Ath. Pol.* as well. The story itself was probably invented in the fifth century to discredit the descendants of Solon's friends and then transmitted through Phanias of Eresus and Polyzelus of Rhodes, who were Plutarch's sources.[34] Why did the *Ath. Pol.* omit the names of Solon's friends? Rhodes says that the 'failure to name the culprits serves no obvious purpose of his own […] he knew conflicting versions of the story and no one seems to have denied it altogether'.[35] If we consider that the work cared only to defend Solon and not his 'friends', the choice to omit their names makes sense. The *Ath. Pol.* was only concerned with detailed historical verification because of its implications for *Solon's* reputation, and only for that reason did it engage in a rhetorical argument to combat accounts that could endanger the coherence of the views on Solon that it contained.

In another passage (*Ath. Pol.* 9.2.4–6), Solon is accused of writing obscure laws on purpose[36] in order to give the people power over the decisions, because the ambiguity would lead to quarrels in the courts, where the people were strong. A few lines earlier, *Ath. Pol.* states that when the people hold power over the votes of the popular courts, they hold power over the government (9.1.6–7). Yet, *Ath. Pol.* 9.2.6–9 says that this accusation is not plausible (*οὐ μὴν εἰκός*), because it was too difficult to describe the ideal, i.e., the best solution to every

[32] Marincola (1997) 280–6. The only appeal which Marincola mentions that is absent in the *Ath. Pol.* is the appeal to native tradition over other versions; but this is clearly irrelevant here since this controversy occurs only in an Athenian context.

[33] Earlier scholars thought this passage derived from Androtion, but cf. Ste. Croix (2004) 300–1, who concludes that this is only 'speculation'.

[34] For detailed discussion see Leão (2003/4) 58–61.

[35] Rhodes (1992) 128–9, who notes in the same passage: 'we may suspect that among those who narrated it were some who did not wish to discredit Conon, Alcibiades and Callias (descendants of the culprits) and who suppressed the names of their ancestors'.

[36] See Leão and Rhodes (2015) 75.

problem.[37] The author's aim here was to call attention to the unfairness of judging Solon's intentions from what happened in the fourth-century when the courts had disregarded the rule of law.

Another polemical passage appears in the section on Pisistratus. First, *Ath. Pol.* 14.2–3 states that Solon opposed Pisistratus' request for a bodyguard which the tyrant later used to seize power. In opposing this, Solon acted dramatically[38] but ineffectively by placing his armour in front of his door. The polemic comes in *Ath. Pol.* 17.2.2–5 with a strong statement: those who say that Pisistratus was a lover of Solon and commander in the war against Megara for Salamis are clearly stupid (*φανερῶς ληροῦσιν*), because their ages do not fit if one calculates the life of each one and the archonship in which they died. This strong rejection is relevant even though modern scholars have often considered the chronological argument insufficient to prove anything.[39] We should take into account that the *Ath. Pol.* was committed to defending Solon's reputation, but that stories about his relationship with Pisistratus were numerous and could not be totally dismissed.[40] Plutarch (*Sol.* 1.3–5, 8.3–4, 29.2–5, 31.2) even tells of a family relationship and a solid political alliance between them. However, *Ath. Pol.* repeatedly (6.3–4, 11.2, 12.4, 14.2–3) underlines Solon's refusal of tyranny, and thus any relationship with the tyrant Pisistratus would stain the image of the celebrated and non-tyrannical lawgiver. The chronological argument here, which is again typical of both courtroom context and historiographical polemics, is therefore necessary to suggest that such an alliance was impossible.

In sum, then, we can observe that the *Ath. Pol.* engaged with and judged many traditions that wished to damage Solon's reputation. On these occasions, the work adopted a more 'judicial' and argumentative approach so as to defend Solon. In rejecting the notion that the work is 'poor history' (something which has constrained the scholarly views on *Ath. Pol.*'s author), we cannot then say that the work was merely following an earlier source without question. It makes sense, then, to search for the reasons why the *Ath. Pol.* was committed to the defence of Solon's reputation.

[37] On Aristotelian ideas about this issue, see *EN* 1103b–1104a, 1137b, and *Pol.* 1269a, 1282b, 1286a.

[38] It might be thought fitting for a poet who was also a political leader to regularly act dramatically when making a point: see Plut. *Sol.* 8. 1–3, where he acts similarly in the war against Megara for Salamis, with the discussion of Leão (2013).

[39] Rhodes (1992) 223–4 and Leão (2001) 250–3.

[40] On Solon and tyranny, see Irwin (2005) 205–80; on Solon and Pisistratus, Leão (2008) 157–62 and (2003/4) 54–5.

5. Solon as an Ethical Example

The *Ath. Pol.* repeatedly remarks that Solon was an arbitrator between the opposing political forces in Athenian social struggles. *Ath. Pol.* 2.1–3 mentions quarrels between the populace and the notables that lasted until the era of Solon, who was the first champion of the people. The following chapters outline the main offices of Athens and the much debated 'Dracontian Constitution'.[41] At the end of Chapter 4, the worst aspect of the constitution for the people is the same as that described in Chapter 2: the land was owned by a few men (2.2, *ἡ δὲ πᾶσα γῆ δι' ὀλίγων ἦν* ~ 4.5, *ἡ χώρα δι' ὀλίγων ἦν*) and the loans were secured on the bodies of the debtors (2.2, *οἱ δανεισμοὶ πᾶσιν ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν ἦσαν'* ~ 4.5, *ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς σώμασιν ἦσαν οἱ δανεισμοί*). The *Ath. Pol.* took the idealisation of Solon as the founder of an ancestral constitution and gave it a specific form that fit well with Aristotelian political and moral ideas: the moderate leader who restrained the excesses of both the rich and the poor. This idea was arguably derived from Solonian poetry, which offered good reasoning about politics for an Aristotelian thinker. The *Ath. Pol.* relied, then, not only on the later idealisations of Solon but also on his political poetry.

Ath. Pol. 5.2 narrates how after composing an elegy Solon is elected by both sides as arbitrator and archon, and entrusted with the government. In this elegy (fr. 4 G–P = 4a W) 'Solon fights with both sides on behalf of both sides' (5.2.8–9, *ἐν ᾗ πρὸς ἑκατέρους ὑπὲρ ἑκατέρων μάχεται καὶ διαμφισβητεῖ*), and then exhorts them to jointly put an end to the conflict. *Ath. Pol.* 5.3 endorses the intermediary leader view: Solon was by birth and reputation from the elite but by property and wealth a member of the middle class,[42] and it confirms this with Solon's own testimony (*μαρτυρεῖ*) quoting fr. 5 G–P = 4c + 4b W, where Solon exhorts the wealthy not to be greedy. So far, the *Ath. Pol.* has portrayed Solon as a moderate and impartial leader who remained between both sides of the conflict, especially criticising the wealthy, but in verses mentioned later characterised as similarly speaking against the excesses of the people (fr. 8 G–P = 6 W and 31 G–P = 37 W).

The *Ath. Pol.* narrative about Solon as an intermediary and moderate leader was mainly based on Solonian poetry itself. Only from 6.1 onwards can we be sure that *Ath. Pol.* used a source other than Solon's poetry. Chapters 7–10 describe a wide range of Solon's political measures, which will not be discussed here since there are no polemical aspects to them. The author feels no need to verify or correct these traditions because they do no harm to Solon's reputation; on the contrary, they improve it and show awareness of the wider tradition about Solon. However, the *Ath. Pol.* ignores the tradition about Solon as a Sage that is treated extensively in Herodotus (1.29–36, 46; 2.177) and Plato

[41] See von Fritz (1954) 73–93 and Rhodes (1992) 53, 84–6.

[42] Leão (2008) 155–6.

(*Prt.* 342e–343b, *Ti.* 20d–25e, *Crit.* 108d–113a).[43] Most likely, the *Ath. Pol.*'s author believed that these aspects did not serve any purpose in building Solon up as a historical example of a moderate statesman.

Ath. Pol. 11.1–2 mentions that Solon travelled to Egypt for both commerce and contemplation[44] and to avoid being troubled by questions about his laws, since both sides in the civil strife changed their minds about him when the reforms had disappointed them. The theme of the moderate lawgiver who mediates civil strife is clearly endorsed (11.2.5–10): the people had presumed that he would redistribute everything, and the notables presumed that he would keep the existing arrangement or change it only slightly. However, Solon opposed both and although a tyranny was open to him by supporting whichever side he wished, he chose to be hated by both to save the city and offer better laws. That is, the *Ath. Pol.* uses the same reasoning that freed Solon from the accusation of corruption in 6.3–4, and the same verification by the authority of Solonian poetry and the unanimity of tradition (12.1–3, *οἵ τ' ἄλλοι συμφωνοῦσι πάντες καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει μέμνηται περὶ αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖσδε* is very similar to 6.4.3–4, *καὶ ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν αὐτὸς πολλαχοῦ μέμνηται, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι συνομολογοῦσι πάντες*).

Chapters 11 and 12 resume the task of building Solon up as the ethical example of an impartial and moderate leader, and Solonian poetry plays a more relevant role than before. We have quotations from several fragments of Solon's poetry, with the author indicating what point is proved by particular verses: for example, fr. 7 G–P = 5 W shows Solon between and against both sides of the civil dispute, while frr. 8 G–P = 6 W and 29b G–P b = 34 W are about how to deal with the populace and about Solon's refusal to redistribute property (i.e., criticism of the people's excess); fr. 30 G–P = 36 W concerns the cancellation of debts and the slaves liberated by the *σεισάχθεια*; and finally, fr. 31 G–P = 37 W repeats the same portrayal of Solon as the mediator between two opposite factions. The many quotations of poetry in *Ath. Pol.* 12 are unique in the whole work.[45] Ancient poets were authorities in all possible senses, and Solon offered through his poems a good example of moderate statesman that was useful to the narrative.

We should recall that Solon was not only a historical source but also a political thinker who is mentioned and esteemed by Aristotle. The similarities between the portrayal of Solon in the *Ath. Pol.* and in the *Politics* have been

[43] For wider discussion about Solon as one of the Seven Sages of Greece see Busine (2002) 17–19, 34–5 and 103–5 and Leão (2010).

[44] Perhaps this unique and brief reference is related to Solon's travels to Egypt, mentioned by Herodotus (2.177) and Plato (*Ti.* 20e–25a).

[45] I leave aside here some popular verses quoted in 19.3 and 20.5.

discussed by H.-J. Gehrke.[46] Aristotle mentions Solon's criticism of the greed of the rich when introducing his discussion of chrematistics (*Pol.* 1256b33–34) also by quoting his poetry (fr. 1 G–P = 13 W, line 71). He also notes (1266b14–19) that Solon and others promulgated laws that prevented one from acquiring as much land as one would wish.[47] This could be an inaccurate mention of his claims to have freed the enslaved earth in fr. 30 G.–P. = 36 W, lines 5–7 (mentioned at *Ath. Pol.* 12.4). In another passage (*Pol.* 1295b39–1296a5), Aristotle says that it is most fortunate when citizens have a moderate and sufficient amount of property because where some acquire too much and others nothing, either the people become radical or the oligarchy is absolute. Thus, tyranny comes from excessive democracy and oligarchy, and much less from the middle governments. This is similar to Solon's statement that he could have seized power by supporting whichever side he wished, the wealthy or the wider populace.

Pol. 1296a 7–9 also refers to the idea of a mixed constitution, noting that where there are many men in the middle, the least amount of strife and disagreement takes place among the citizens. In *Pol.* 1296a18–21, Solon is mentioned, along with Lycurgus and Charondas, as a middle-class lawgiver which seems like an echo of the *Ath. Pol.*'s portrayal of Solon as a middle-class citizen. The Aristotelian school, then, intends to stress Solon's attitude towards excessive greed since that was a historical problem more relevant than Solon's actual property and nobility.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can see that *Ath. Pol.* 2–17 expresses typical fourth-century historical thinking. It selects the 'best' source available and refutes versions that endanger the coherence of the *exemplum* of a moderate lawgiver and statesman embodied by Solon. Solon's poems offered an ancient, persuasive, and virtuous testimony for that period of Athenian history, and this poetry portrayed Solon as a good and moderate leader. The *Ath. Pol.* was committed to defending Solon's reputation because it was persuaded by Solon's political poetry, often quoted in passages that endorse the moderate leader who intervenes in the inner conflicts between rich and poor in the *polis*. The *Ath. Pol.*'s statements, in quoting Solonian poetry, offer good political thinking and action, so the work not only followed the idealisations derived from the discussion of the *patrios politeia* but also contributed to it with its own ideas. In doing that, Solonian poetry was both historical source and influential political reasoning that provided a historical example of a moderate and middle-class

[46] Gehrke (2006) 276–88.

[47] See Leão and Rhodes (2015) 109–10, 194–5.

lawgiver, a portrait that was later used in the *Politics* with slight differences of detail and focus.[48]

Solon was a historical example of a moderate political lawgiver, one that Aristotle found useful, and that is why, in the historiographical part of the research, his reputation had to be preserved against defamatory traditions. The tradition that agreed with this view of Solon was preserved by the *Ath. Pol.*, while the 'variant' versions were refuted using the tools of rhetoric. The tradition of Solon as a Sage is absent because the *Ath. Pol.* focused particularly on the political aspects of Solon's career. Other traditions about Solon's political deeds, especially chs. 7–10 which describe policies that today we know were probably not Solonian, are mentioned because they do not harm Solon's reputation as a moderate statesman; on contrary, they improve it. We can conclude that the *Ath. Pol.* made a respectable selection of sources; and the rhetorical reasoning employed in the defence of Solon, far from constituting 'poor history', is valuable for helping us see the relationship between judicial rhetoric and historical polemics in fourth-century historiography.

DENIS CORREA
Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia dniscorrea@gmail.com

[48] Gehrke (2006) 286–7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atack, C. (2010) *Ancestral Constitutions in Fourth-Century BCE Athenian Political Argument: Genre and Re-Invention* (MPhil thesis, Cambridge).

Bertelli, L. (2014) 'Aristotle and History', in G. Parmeggiani, ed., *Between Thucydides and Polybius: the Golden Age of Greek Historiography* (Washington, D.C.) 289–304.

Blank, D. L. (1984) 'Dialectical Method in the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*', *GRBS* 25: 275–84.

Blok, J. H. and A. P. M. H. Lardinois, edd. (2006) *Solon of Athens: New Historical and Philological Approaches* (Leiden).

Boulay, B. (2005) 'Histoire et narrativité, autour des chapitres 9 et 23 de la Poétique d'Aristote,' *Lalies* 26: 171–87; also available on-line in the *Atelier* series of *Fabula*: https://www.fabula.org/ressources-atelier.php.

Braet, A. C. (1999) 'The Enthymeme in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: From Argumentation Theory to Logic', *Informal Logic* 19: 101–17.

Busine, A. (2002) *Les Septs sages de la Grèce antique: transmission et utilisation d'un patrimonie légendarie d'Hérodote à Plutarque* (Paris).

Cauer, F. (1891) *Hat Aristoteles die Schrift vom Staate der Athener geschrieben?* (Stuttgart).

Clarke, K. (2008) *Making Time for the Past: Local Histories and the Polis* (Oxford).

Day, J. and M. Chambers (1962) *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles).

Finley, M. I. (1975) *The Use and Abuse of History* (London and New York).

Flower, M. A. (1998) 'Simonides, Ephorus, and Herodotus on the Battle of Thermopylae', *CQ* 48: 365–79.

Fritz, K. von (1954) 'The Composition of Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* and the So-Called Dracontian Constitution', *CPh* 49: 73–93.

Gehrke, H.-J. (2006) 'The Figure of Solon in the Athênaiôn Politeia', in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 276–89.

Hansen, M. H. (1999) *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*^{2} (London).

Harding, P. (1977) 'Atthis and Politeia', *Historia* 26: 148–60.

Heath, M. (1991) 'The Universality of Poetry in Aristotle's *Poetics*', *CQ* 41: 389–402.

Hignett, C. (1958) *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century* (Oxford).

Hornblower, S., ed. (1996) *Greek Historiography* (Oxford).

Huxley, G. (1972) 'On Aristotle's Historical Methods', *GRBS* 13: 157–69.

—— (1973) 'Aristotle as Antiquary', *GRBS* 14: 271–86.

Irwin, E. (2005) *Solon and Early Greek Poetry: The Politics of Exhortation* (Cambridge).

Jacoby, F. (1949) *Atthis: The Local Chronicles of Ancient Athens* (Oxford).

Keaney, J. J. (1969) 'Ring Composition in Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*', *AJPh* 90: 406–23.

—— (1970) 'The Date of Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*', *Historia* 19: 326–36.

—— (1992) *The Composition of Aristotle's* Athenaion Politeia (New York and Oxford).
Lardinois, A. P. M. H. (2006) 'Have We Solon's Verses?', in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 15–35.
Leão, D. F. (2001) *Sólon: Ética e Política* (Lisboa).
—— (2002) 'Sólon e a lei sobre a neutralidade em tempos de *stasis*', *Ágora* 4: 25–37.
—— (2003/4) 'Plutarch and the Dark Side of Solon's Political Activity', *Ploutarchos* n.s. 1: 51–62.
—— (2008) 'A *sophos* in Arms: Plutarch and the Tradition of Solon's Opposition to the Tyranny of Pisistratus', in J. R. Ferreira, L. van der Stockt, and M. do C. Fialho, edd., *Philosophy in Society: Virtues and Values in Plutarch* (Leuven and Coimbra) 155–63.
—— (2010) 'The Seven Sages and Plato', in S. Giombini and F. Marcacci, edd., *Il quinto secolo: studi di filosofia antica in onore di Livio Rossetti* (Città di Castello) 403–14.
—— (2013) 'As jogadas de Sólon e a esperteza dos Atenienses: Plutarco e o uso irónico da teatralidade e das metáforas na *Vita Solonis*', in M. C. Pimentel and P. F. Alberto, edd., *Vir bonus peritissimus aeque: Estudos de homenagem a Arnaldo do Espírito Santo* (Lisboa) 175–85.
—— and P. J. Rhodes (2015) *The Laws of Solon: A New Edition with Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (London and New York).
Marincola, J. (1997) *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge).
Mathieu, G. (1915) *Constitution d'Athènes: essai sur la méthode suivie par Aristote dans la discussion des textes* (Paris).
Mossé, C. (1979) 'Comment s'élabore un mythe politique: Solon, "père fondateur" de la démocratie athénienne', *AnnÉconSocCiv* 43: 425–37.
Noussia-Fantuzzi, M. (2010) *Solon the Athenian: the Poetic Fragments* (Leiden).
Parmeggiani, G. (2011) *Eforo di Cuma: studi di storiografia greca* (Bologna).
Pires, F. M. (1999) *Mithistoria* (São Paulo).
Rhodes, P. J. (1992) *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford); repr. of 1981 ed. with addenda.
—— (2002) *The Athenian Constitution* (Harmondsworth); corr. repr. of 1984 ed.
Sacks, K. S. (1996) 'Diodorus and His Sources: Conformity and Creativity', in Hornblower (1996) 213–32.
Shrimpton, G. S. (1997) *History and Memory in Ancient Greece* (Montreal).
Schepens, G. (2007) 'History and *Historia*: Inquiry in the Greek Historians', in J. Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, 2 vols (Malden, Mass. and Oxford) I.39–55.
Ste. Croix, G. E. M. de (2004) *Athenian Democratic Origins and Other Essays* (Oxford).
Weil, R. (1960) *Aristote et l'histoire* (Paris).
Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von. (1893) *Aristoteles und Athen* (Berlin).