

CRITIAS: MEMBER OF THE FOUR HUNDRED?

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Very little is known of Critias' career before the rule of the Five Thousand. In 415 B.C. he was implicated in the mutilation of the Herms (Andoc. 1.47). We also know that after the overthrow of the Four Hundred he proposed two measures. He proposed not only the recall of Alcibiades (Plut. *Alcib.* 33.1) but also the trial of the dead Phrynichus for treason (Lycurg. *Leoc.* 113). Since these two measures were proposed not long after the fall of the Four Hundred, we naturally wonder what Critias was doing during the rule of the Four Hundred. In particular, we are interested in finding out whether Critias was a member of the Four Hundred or not.

We do have two pieces of evidence which suggest that Critias was a member of the Four Hundred. Lysias in his speech *Against Agoratus* asks (Lysias 13.74):¹

πότερον οὖν δοκοῦσιν ὑμῖν οἱ τριάκοντα καὶ ἡ βουλὴ ἢ τότε βουλευούσα, οἱ αὐτοὶ ἦσαν ἅπαντες τῶν τετρακοσίων τῶν φυγόντων, ἀφεῖναι ἂν λαβόντες τὸν Φρύνιχον ἀποκτείναντα, ἢ τιμωρήσασθαι ὑπὲρ Φρυνίχου καὶ τῆς φυγῆς ἧς αὐτοὶ ἔφυγον;

The question implies that the Thirty and the members of the council during the rule of the Thirty were all members of the Four Hundred. Lysias, however, cannot be entirely correct. In the first place, as Lysias himself has already indicated (13.73), some members of the Four

¹ "Do you then think that the Thirty and the members of the council at that time, who were themselves all members of the Four Hundred who had gone into exile, would have arrested and released the murderer of Phrynichus or would have punished him to avenge Phrynichus and their own exile?"

There are some textual problems which have received considerable attention and need not detain us. I have followed the edition of T. Thalheim (Teubner 1901) and the Oxford text (edited by C. Hude, 1912).

Hundred were not exiled. Secondly, Lysias has wrongly suggested that the Four Hundred were, at least, five hundred and thirty in number. On the other hand, Lysias' evidence is not entirely valueless. Some members of the Thirty had also been members of the Four Hundred. These include Aristotle (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.46), Melobius,² Mnesilochus,³ Onomacles,⁴ and Theramenes.⁵ We may, therefore, infer from Lysias' evidence that some members of the Thirty had also been members of the Four Hundred, but we cannot be certain of a particular oligarch's membership in both oligarchies till the dual membership suggested by Lysias' misleading evidence is supported by corroborating evidence. In the case of Critias the corroborating evidence seems to be provided by Ps.-Demosthenes' speech *Against Theocrines* (58.67) where the plaintiff says:⁶

Ἀριστοκράτης ὁ Σκελίου...κατασκάψας τὴν Ἡετιώνειαν, εἰς ἣν Λακεδαιμονίους ἐμελλον οἱ περὶ Κριτίαν ὑποδέχσθαι.

Aristocrates and Theramenes played a leading role in the opposition to the rule of the Four Hundred and participated in the demolition of the fort at Eetioneia, which the opposition alleged (Thuc. 8.90.3), and Thucydides (8.91.3 and 92.1) confirms, was being built for the purpose of admitting the Lacedaemonians. Ps.-Demosthenes' evidence thus suggests not only that Critias was a member of the Four Hundred but also that he was one of the Four Hundred who intended to maintain their rule even at the cost of betraying Athens to Sparta. Many scholars have accepted the first suggestion but have rejected the second

² Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 29.1-2; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2. For the identification, see I. Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* (Berlin 1901-03) 10102; Th. Lenschau, "Triakonta," *RE* 12 (1937) 2363-64; Kahrstedt, "Melobius," *RE* 29 (1931) 559; J. E. Sandys, *Aristotle's Constitution of Athens* (London 1912) 123.

³ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 33.1; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2. For the identification, see Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* 10324 and "Mnasilochus" (1) *RE* 30 (1932) 2254; G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte*² 3, 2, 1508 n. 3; A. Modrzejewski, "Mnesilochus (3)," *RE* 30 (1932) 2277; Lenschau, "Triakonta," *RE* 12 (1937) 2363-64; R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1969) 251.

⁴ Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2; Ps.-Plut. *Vitae Decem Orat.* 833 E-F; Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte*² 3, 2, 1493 n. 1; G. Gilbert, *Beiträge zur Innern Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter des Peloponnesischen Krieges* (Leipzig 1877) 297.

⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2; Thuc. 8.68.4 and 8.89.2; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 32.2; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.30; Schol. Aristoph. *Lysistrata* 490.

⁶ "Aristocrates, the son of Scelias, . . . demolished the fort at Eetioneia into which Critias and his associates intended to admit the Lacedaemonians."

on the ground that on the fall of the Four Hundred Critias, unlike Peisander, Alexicles and other members of the Four Hundred who had supported the construction of the fort at Eetioneia, neither fled the city nor was brought to trial; rather he remained in the city and proposed those measures already referred to. These scholars⁷ have, therefore, concluded that Critias was a member of the Four Hundred.

There are some scholars, on the other hand, who have rejected this view. These include Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Lenschau.⁸ Recently their case has been taken up and developed in an article written by Avery.⁹ The writer believes, on the basis of the two measures proposed by Critias after the fall of the Four Hundred, that in 411 "Critias was not a radical oligarch." He also maintains that Critias was not a member of the Four Hundred, arguing as follows:

1. He points out that the oligarchs had originally planned Alcibiades' participation in the revolution of the Four Hundred. The oligarchs, however, finally decided to manage the revolution without Alcibiades. Avery maintains that, when this decision was taken, the oligarchs excluded Alcibiades' friends and admitted his enemies. He suggests that Alcibiades' friends were "equally anxious to dissociate themselves from the project which their leader had abandoned." On the fall of the Four Hundred Critias seems to have been Alcibiades' agent in the city. Avery accordingly argues that since Alcibiades "denounced the Four Hundred, but supported the Five Thousand it is improbable that Critias, devoted to Alcibiades and proud of it, would have been one of the Four Hundred now so absolutely divided from Alcibiades."
2. In support of his hypothesis that Critias was not a member of the Four Hundred, Avery says "none of the men implicated in the mutilation of the Herms or the profanation of the Mysteries in 415 seems to have taken part in the first oligarchy."

⁷ Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* 8792; W. S. Ferguson, *Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge 1927) 5, 326, 338 and 365; Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte*² 3, 2, 1462 n. 3; Diehl, "Kritias (5)," *RE* 11 (1922) 1903; D. Stephans, *Critias: Life and Literary Remains* (Cincinnati 1939) 34.

⁸ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon: sein Leben und seine Werke* (Berlin 1959⁵) 88; Lenschau, "Triakonta," *RE* 12 (1937) 2363-64.

⁹ H. C. Avery, "Critias and the Four Hundred," *CP* 58 (1963) 165-67.

3. Avery's final argument is based on the evidence of Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 37.1). According to Aristotle, when the Thirty decided to eliminate Theramenes, they passed two laws. One of the laws gave the Thirty the power of life and death over those who were not listed among the Three Thousand. The second law excluded from the Three Thousand those who either had participated in the demolition of the fortifications at Eetioneia or had actively opposed the Four Hundred. Avery argues "This *ad hominem* legislation succeeded in isolating Theramenes. But to succeed it had to refer to Theramenes alone. It could hardly have been applicable to Critias also. If indeed Critias had been a moderate oligarch in 411 (the only kind of oligarch he could have been), it would have applied as much to him as to Theramenes." The writer accordingly concludes that in 411 B.C. "Critias was not an oligarch" but "remained a democrat, perhaps not so much out of conviction as out of lack of a suitable opportunity for change."

We may now examine the validity of Avery's contention. In his first argument the writer assumes that Critias was Alcibiades' friend and so devoted to his friend that he would be anxious to refuse participation in a project which Alcibiades his "leader had abandoned." This assumption, it seems to me, must be supported by the evidence of close co-operation between Critias and Alcibiades in their respective careers. However, there is very little to support this assumption. In the period succeeding the overthrow of the Four Hundred such co-operation is evidenced by Critias' two proposals. This, however, is the only evidence of co-operation between Critias and Alcibiades. On the other hand, for most of their lives the two seem to have embarked on separate and divergent careers. Whereas nothing is heard of Critias' political activities till 415 B.C. when he was alleged to have participated in the mutilation of the Herms, Alcibiades developed an interest in politics at an early age. In 421 he suffered wounded pride when the Spartans ignored him in their negotiations for peace with Athens (Thuc. 5.43). He held the generalship in 420/19 (Plut. *Alcib.* 15; *Nicias* 10), 419/18 (Thuc. 5.55.4; Diod. 12.78), 417/16 (Thuc. 5.84.1; Plut. *Alcib.* 15), 416/15 (Thuc. 5.116.2-4; Plut. *Alcib.* 16.5) and 415/14

(Thuc. 6.48; Plut. *Alcib.* 20). In 418/17 B.C. he joined forces with Nicias to effect the ostracism of Hyperbolus (Plut. *Alcib.* 13). During these years, then, Alcibiades seems to have been a prominent statesman in democratic Athens while Critias seems to have shunned politics mainly because, if Xenophon's Theramenes (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.47) is to be believed, he was an enemy of democracy. Nor is there any evidence of co-operation between the two after Critias' two proposals. Alcibiades continued to show his interest in military expeditions, operating in the Hellespont area, and finally was elected extraordinary general for the year 407/6. Finally, when Critias was exiled and Alcibiades had to withdraw into exile, the former went to Thessaly, while the latter retired to his castle on the Hellespont. The evidence, therefore, by no means suggests that Critias followed in the footsteps of Alcibiades. Rather, the evidence suggests that they were two independent men, each with his own interests. Besides, there is nothing to support the assumption that Critias was so devoted to Alcibiades that he would follow Alcibiades at the expense of his own career. We know that they were both students of Socrates (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12-48). We also know that Critias proposed Alcibiades' recall from exile. But we also know that the so-called devotion to Alcibiades did not prevent Critias, when he was one of the Thirty, from desiring Alcibiades' execution (Plut. *Alcib.* 38.3-4; Nepos *Alcib.* 10.1). The sort of devotion which could have prompted Critias, who was not an exile, to refuse membership in the Four Hundred because Alcibiades, who was an exile, was excluded from the Four Hundred must have been extraordinary. The evidence suggests, however, that Critias had no such devotion.

Avery's second point is that none of those who were "implicated in the mutilation of the Herms or the profanation of the Mysteries" seems to have participated in the oligarchy of the Four Hundred. This point seems plausible but in reality is a weak support for the writer's theory. The majority of those who were implicated in these two scandals did not participate in the oligarchy of the Four Hundred, not because implication in the scandals *per se* disqualified them from the revolution, but because they had been either executed or exiled. Andocides has preserved in his speech *On the Mysteries* the names of sixty-seven of those who were alleged to have participated in the

scandals.¹⁰ Of those who were implicated in the profanation of the Mysteries only one, Leogoras (Andocides' father), who was exonerated before a jury of six thousand (Andoc. 1.17), was a possible candidate for the oligarchical body.¹¹ Of those who were implicated in the mutilation of the Herms, only ten, including Leogoras, were possible candidates.¹² Therefore, of the sixty-seven men known to have been involved in the two scandals, only ten, including Critias, could have been considered for membership in the Four Hundred.¹³ These ten possible candidates are Leogoras (PA 9075), Charmides, son of Aristotle (PA 15510), Taureas (PA 13429), Nisaeus (PA 11125), Callias, son of Alcmaeon (PA 7822), Euphemus (PA 6040), Phrynichus (PA 15007),

¹⁰ Andoc. 1.12-13, 15-18, 35, 42, 47, 67. See also W. K. Pritchett, "The Attic Stelai," *Hesperia* 22 (1953) 231-32.

¹¹ Thirty-three men were implicated in the profanation of the mysteries (Andoc. 1.12-13, 15-18). Five of these (Teucus, a metic, and 4 slaves—Andromachus, his brother, Hicesius, and Meletus' slave) were not Athenian citizens and so were automatically disqualified from participation in the oligarchy. Apart from Leogoras, therefore, there were twenty-seven implicated Athenians. One of these, Polystratus, was arrested and executed (Andoc. 1.13). The rest fled. They were condemned to death in absentia (Andoc. 1.13). They were in exile and so could not have been considered for membership in the Four Hundred.

¹² Those who were denounced by both Teucus and Andocides (twenty-two in number) either were executed or had retired into exile (Andoc. 1.52 and 59). Andocides was granted immunity but not long afterwards (415 B.C.) he was embarrassed by the decree of Isotimides (Andoc. 1.71) and had to retire into exile. We cannot be certain about the case of Mantitheus and Apsephion. They were denounced by Diocleides (Andoc. 1.43), but exonerated by both Teucus (Andoc. 1.35) and Andocides (Andoc. 1.67) and could, therefore, have returned to Athens (Andoc. 1.66). MacDowell, *Andokides: On the Mysteries* (Oxford 1962) 104, believes that they returned to Athens. This, however, seems unlikely. According to Andocides (1.43-44), Mantitheus and Apsephion, on being denounced by Diocleides, fled and joined the enemy. This desertion must have complicated their case and, indeed, Mantitheus may be identified with the Mantitheus who in 411 B.C. was together with Alcibiades imprisoned at Sardis (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.10. See also Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* 9670; Kahrstedt, "Mantitheos (I)," *RE* 28 [1930] 1355).

¹³ Avery (167 note 18) uses the case of "Eryximachus son of Acoumenos (Kirchner, PA 5187), Phaedrus son of Pythocles of the deme Myrrhinus (PA 13960 and 13950) and Andron son of Androtion of the deme Gargettus (PA 921)," three young men who are mentioned in Plato *Prot.* 315c as "an interesting illustration" of his theory that those who were implicated in the two scandals were denied membership in the Four Hundred. He maintains that of these three Andron who was not implicated in the scandals joined the revolution of the Four Hundred. This, however, seems to be an inappropriate illustration, for Eryximachus and Phaedrus could not join the revolution solely because they had been either executed or exiled (Andoc. 1.15 and 34).

Callias, son of Telocles (*PA* 7840), Eucrates (*PA* 5757) and our Critias.¹⁴ In the case of the first seven, nothing is known of their activities in the period following their implication in the scandals. Callias, son of Telocles, is not heard of till some time in the beginning of the fourth century when he became a gymnasiarch.¹⁵ Eucrates, apart from Critias, is the only possible candidate of whom we have some substantial information. He held the generalship in both 412/11¹⁶ and 405/4 (*Lysias* 18.4). *Lysias* (18.4-5) informs us that those who planned the oligarchy of the Thirty invited him to join in their movement, but he refused and perished fighting for the safety of the Athenian people. We do not know whether he was a member of the Four Hundred or not. In his case, however, the evidence suggests that, if he did not join the revolution of the Four Hundred, it was due to his preference for democracy. It seems, therefore, that the majority of those implicated in the two scandals could not have taken part in the revolution of the Four Hundred solely because they had been condemned to death and either had been executed or had retired into exile. Alcibiades was one of these. The remaining ten were exonerated and we have no evidence that they were excluded from the Four Hundred.

Finally, Avery argues that the law which "forbade participation in the government under the Thirty to all those who had taken part in the destruction of the fort at Eetioneia or who had done anything against the Four Hundred" suggests that in 411 Critias was not a "moderate oligarch" and, since Critias could not have been a "radical oligarch," "it follows that Critias was not an oligarch in 411." The second law reported by Aristotle cannot be found in Xenophon's account of the confrontation between Theramenes and Critias, and some scholars¹⁷ have suggested that it was passed after Theramenes' execution and was a measure motivated by the desire to purge the council and the Three Thousand of unreliable elements. The law was aimed directly at

¹⁴ Andoc. (1.68) says that he saved twelve relatives, but we do not know the names of the remaining two relatives.

¹⁵ *IG* 2², 3018; Kirchner, *PA* 7840; Swoboda, "Kallias (9)," *RE* 10 (1919) 1623; MacDowell, *Andokides: On the Mysteries* 90.

¹⁶ Aristoph. *Lysistrata* 103 and schol. See also MacDowell, *Andokides: On the Mysteries* 97; Kirchner, *PA* 5757; Swoboda, "Eukrates (5)," *RE* 6 (1907) 1057; K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*² 2, 2, 266 and 269.

¹⁷ C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1952) 389; Lenschau, "Triakonta," *RE* 12 (1937) 2368.

enemies of oligarchy, and the legislators, looking back at the events of 411/10 B.C., considered participation in the demolition of the fort at Eetioneia as an incontrovertible mark of opponents of oligarchy. To this they added the vague clause of any act of opposition to the Four Hundred, a clause which they apparently intended to interpret at their own discretion. Avery rightly points out that the law "could hardly have been applicable to Critias." However, he seems to have reached an unacceptable conclusion. It seems to me that the law, far from showing that "Critias was not an oligarch in 411 B.C.," indicates Critias' astuteness in the arena of political rivalry. Thucydides' account—the most detailed account of the activities of the opponents of the Four Hundred—suggests how Critias could have sponsored a legislation which could be applicable to Theramenes but inapplicable to him. According to Thucydides (8.92), the opponents of the Four Hundred acted secretly and started to act boldly only after Phrynichus had been assassinated with impunity. One of their bold acts was the arrest of Alexicles by the hoplites who were building the fort at Eetioneia—Aristocrates was one of these. When this act was reported to the Four Hundred who were assembled at the council-chamber, Theramenes with another member of the opposition who was also a general promised to go and help to rescue Alexicles. When Theramenes and his associate reached Eetioneia, the hoplites, encouraged by Theramenes, demolished the fortification. Thucydides' account thus suggests that the majority of the Four Hundred, both satisfied and dissatisfied oligarchs (or, as some will put it, both extreme and moderate oligarchs), were assembled at the council-chamber when three dissatisfied oligarchs—i.e., Theramenes, Aristocrates and an unnamed general—incited the hoplites to demolish the fortifications. It seems clear, therefore, that, although there were probably many dissatisfied members of the Four Hundred, most of them were not present at the scene of the demolition of the fort. Eetioneia, as Wade-Gery¹⁸ has pointed out, became "the acid test." In 411 Critias "took one side, in 403 the other." And, indeed, Thucydides' account suggests that the circumstances under which the fort at Eetioneia was destroyed were such that many oligarchs, like Critias, could have passed the test.

¹⁸ H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 279 note 2.

Since, then, the objections to Critias' membership in the Four Hundred seem to have no validity, it seems best to follow Busolt (GG² 3, 2, 1462 and note 3) in supposing that the evidence of ps.-Demosthenes is partly correct—in its suggestion that Critias was a member of the Four Hundred—and partly erroneous—in its suggestion that Critias was one of those who wanted to betray the city. We do not know for certain what contributed to this error, but the most satisfactory solution seems to be that of Wade-Gery, who believes that, thanks to Critias' later activities, for instance, "his endorsement, early in 403, of the Eetioneia policy," his actual political position during the time of the Four Hundred was forgotten. He adds that "to a fourth century orator, Kritias was a conventional villain, and few cared to remember the 'respectable' Kritias of 411."¹⁹ It seems, therefore, that the evidence of ps.-Demosthenes is a conflation of two separate traditions—the tradition of Critias' activities in 411/10 and the tradition of his activities in 404/3. Indeed, if Xenophon's Theramenes is to be believed, we should reject the assumption that "during the first oligarchy he (i.e., Critias) remained a democrat." During Theramenes' trial he, according to Xenophon, said:²⁰

οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἐν μὲν τῇ
δημοκρατίᾳ πάντως μισοδημότατος ἐνομίζου, ἐν δὲ τῇ
ἀριστοκρατίᾳ πάντων μισοχρηστότατος γεγένησαι.

The evidence thus suggests that Critias was never a democrat. As an enemy of democracy, he must have desired the overthrow of the hated government and it is very likely that he did not ignore the opportunity offered by the revolution of the Four Hundred.

¹⁹ To illustrate what fourth-century orators thought of Critias, Wade-Gery (*Essays in Greek History* 279–80) cites Demosthenes 24.90, Aeschines 1.173 and Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.16.1416b26–29.

²⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.47. "For you in the days of the democracy were regarded as the bitterest of all haters of the commons, and under the aristocracy you have shown yourself the bitterest of all haters of the better classes." Translated by C. L. Brownson.

It could be objected that Theramenes was defending himself against Critias' charges and under such circumstances his evidence cannot be reliable. It seems, however, that the evidence is substantially correct. There is a reference to Critias' attitude under two regimes, namely the democracy and the oligarchy of the Thirty. Since Theramenes' description of Critias' attitude during the oligarchy of the Thirty is consistent with what we know of Critias, the member of the Thirty, his description of Critias' attitude during the democracy is probably correct.