Affective states and emotional spaces
Memory, identity, and urban space

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Abstract: At the beginning of the fifth century BC, as a result of the enlargement of the fleet and the consequent growth of the social base following the enactment of Naval Law by Themistocles (482/1 BC), the entire coastal area of Piraeus began to become recognized as the centre of maritime power and the cultural medium of democratic values as opposed to the oligarchic pressures of the landed aristocracy. In Plato's political view, Themistocles' policy of social basis enlargement had undermined the cohesion and stability of the city-state which was founded on the concept of κοινωνία. By these premises, we aim to discuss the ideological representation of the classical *polis* in the Platonic discourse which, through an emotional lens, draws the portrait of a city culturally divided between τὸ θυμοειδές and τὸ φιλομαθές, highlighting the dangers of a corrupting connectivity of which the port of Piraeus embodies a symbol of intense emotional significance.

Keywords: Classical Athens – cultural memory – discourse and identity – urban space – corrupting connectivity

ἴθι δή, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τῷ λόγῳ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ποιῶμεν πόλιν·
ποιήσει δὲ αὐτήν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ ἡμετέρα χρεία.
(Plat. *Resp.* 2, 369c)

1. A theoretical premise

In current times, the research on humanities and social science have been affected by an increasing interest in reconsidering the significance of emotion and affect in society, and the development of empirical research and theorizing around these subjects. Some have labelled this interest as an 'affective turn' or a 'turn to affect', which suggests a profound and wide-ranging reshaping of disciplines.

The contemporary analysis of sociologists and cultural theorists focuses on changes in emotional regimes or styles and considers the intersection of emotions and social change, historically and contemporaneously, building upon complex theoretical models of emotions and social change, and involving different approaches to investigation in the direction of a reshaping of sociological and

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historical thinking and research. As we read in the excerpt from the chapter *The Emotional Turn in the Humanities and Social Sciences* by the historian David Lemmings and the sociologist Ann Brooks:

> Scholars working in the humanities and social sciences have recently developed a range of concepts and frameworks broadly related to the study of human emotions. Some have gone so far as to label this as a "turn to emotions," or an "affective turn," thereby suggesting a profound and wide-ranging reshaping of disciplines and approaches similar to that wrought by the textual or linguistic turn that began in the 1970s. Indeed, if the linguistic turn represents our acknowledgment that language helps to constitute reality, then an affective turn implies that emotions have a similarly fundamental role in human experience.[1]

A 'turn to emotions' and a related 'affective turn' in human sciences have been hailed by many academics as a sign of the profound reshaping of a broad range of disciplines, from evolutionary biology and neuroscience to sociology and political science to cultural history and critical theory.

In the context of philosophical and sociological studies in the second half of the last century, Michel Foucault's genealogies convincingly demonstrated that discourses, practices, and even physical ways of existing, which we supposed to be universal and natural, have their own history. Even those aspects we most appreciate as signs of our inner truth and individuality cannot be extrapolated from the social and historical context that produced them. Foucault's *History of Sexuality* series has been influential in the field of cultural studies of antiquity, gaining praise for its new approach, but also criticism for its narrow focus and lack of historical rigour. The latter accusation, in my opinion, fails to appreciate Foucault's stated aims for his own work. Rather than attempting to provide an accurate description of what life was like in antiquity, Foucault is interested in historicising the subject in other moments of time to problematise the self and the subjectivity in the present. This shifting concern some parallels, for example, that expressed in feminist studies of antiquity, in which some scholars engage in a project of retrieval (what did women do, think and want) rather than representation (i.e., what do discourses of sex, gender, family, and so on produce, in other words what do they tell us about the ways in which society self-perceived and self-organised?).

In the first decade of the new millennium, David Konstan's volume, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks. Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (2006), filled the gap that arose between the genealogist and the historian of antiquity in several aspects by offering the accurate and informed study that in Foucault's opinion was necessary to overturn assumptions about the purported universality of contemporary human experience. As Kate Drabinski pointed out in her review of Konstan's work (2010), this study effectively highlights the divergence

[1] Lemmings, Brooks 2014, 3. See, also, Brooks 2017.

between the ways in which the ancient Greeks conceived of emotions and emotional experiences and those of the contemporary period according to schematism and to a mentality that reveal not only the peculiar social organisation of the period, but also the very different construction of the social subject itself. In this sense, the study of the emotions of ancient Greece teaches us about the history and contexts of antiquity and, potentially, it enlightens our current conceptions of emotions and, even more fundamentally, of individuality.

Konstan perfectly shows the different social world of emotions in ancient Greece. Echoing Foucault's research on modern subjectivity, the scholar underlines how the differences between our conceptions of emotions and those of the ancient Greeks rest on diverse moral universes and levels of self-awareness as well as on unlike social organisations in these historical contexts. In doing so, the work of Konstan offers an important supplement to Foucault's project, revealing that emotions really do have their own history, and even what seems natural – like our feelings – is a construct entrusted and conveyed by language, culture, and power.[2] Recalling Foucault, every history is a history of the present: it not only historicises the present, but also lays bare the issues that dominate the present context, today as in antiquity. Thus, «a careful examination of the value of emotion terms in other languages can also enrich and clarify our own emotional vocabulary».[3] Making the rhetoric an excellent resource for exploring the scientific life of emotions, as well as the role of emotions in intersubjective exchange dependent on narrative context, Konstan underlines how, given the social context and life of emotions in ancient Greek culture, emotion was an act of cognition and of judgment, centred on the acts and on the responses of the others.

By these premises, taking as a case study the rhetorical reflection on classical Athens, the present contribution aims to analyse the modes of perception, construction, and representation of the emotional spaces of the ancient city linked to as many discursive elaborations of the city identity. It starts from the distinction of the emotional spheres that characterise the construction of the self (as an Athenian citizen) and of the other (the foreigner), in the light of the

[2] On the cultural and not innate character of emotions not all classical scholars agree: see, e.g., Tritle 2000. Starting with the proposition that «the human experience with violence, culture, and survival is one that transcends time» (xii), in his erudite, provocative, and moving analysis, Tritle constructs parallel narratives of ancient Greece and the Vietnam-era United States. From these, he argues that notions of heroism, the effects of violence-induced trauma (post-traumatic stress disorder) or depictions of the enemy as 'other', and mourning practices are similar, even identical in both cultures. But, although his preface claims to eschew «nineteenth-century positivism» in favor of a Burckhardt-like «broad cultural approach», Tritle repeatedly treats texts as straightforward depictions of reality (xi-xii); elsewhere, he tends to read texts as literal reality. Anyway, Tritle's work represents an important contribution to understanding Greek warfare and society. The nature of violence and post-combat trauma in antiquity, women's (as well as men's) experience of war, representations of violence in ancient literature: Tritle shows that all these deserve further investigation, charting a fruitful research ground.

[3] Konstan 2006, 110.

three epistemic directives introduced in the human and social sciences by the Discourse Analysis (DA) or Discourse Studies,[4] Spatial Turn,[5] Affective Turn.

2. The psychosomatic topography of Plato's *Republic*

Κατέβην χθὲς εἰς Πειραιᾶ. In the first book of the *Republic*,[6] Plato stages a great choral discussion on the central themes of ethics and politics – justice and power – aimed at affirming that justice is the only possible condition that makes man truly human, which ensures his domestication against the wild thrusts of πλεονεξία.[7] The dialogue is set on the day of a religious festival with a barbaric atmosphere, the Bendideian festivals of the Thracians, and in a place as liminal to the *polis* as Piraeus. This appears a perfect meeting ground, therefore, for young Athenian aristocrats, intellectuals such as Socrates and Thrasymachus, wealthy metics such as the family of Cephalus. At the same time, it becomes a point of observation on the problems of the city, close to but outside it. As we know, the Athenian philosopher's relationship with the harbour of Athens is problematic and conflictual. The festivals attended by Socrates and the other figures of the dialogue give the occasion for thought to start talking about themes to which the philosopher will also return in his last work. To go down (καταβαίνω) to Piraeus implies a kind of descent into the underworld, a *katabasis* that imposes contact with the 'lower' areas of the city, its social strata, its cultural traditions, its political-ideological conflicts.

Piraeus was the first melting-pot of Greek culture. For Plato, the great harbour is a disturbing and fearsome space: from the sea comes «a disorderly

[4] Discourse Analysis (DA), or Discourse Studies, is the approach to the analysis of written, verbal or sign usage, or any significant semiotic event. Differently from the traditional linguistic, discourse analysts not only study the use of language 'beyond the sentence boundary', but also prefer to analyse 'natural' language use in its cultural context. Discourse analysis is a way of understanding social interactions. See Gale 2010, 10: «Language and social interaction are the reality constituting practices that achieve identity, social institutions, and social order».

[5] The Spatial Turn in the humanities has fueled new ways of thinking about landscape as a lived environment which is radically affected by human hands and human minds, and which radically affects human experience. At the same time, scholars of Greek myth have become more sensitive to the contextual dynamics which animate the mythic tradition, having seen ancient narratives as the product of an activity which is both precisely situated in, and contingent on, its environment. See Hawes 2017, 1; for a partial bibliography, see Horster 2010; de Jong 2012; *The Ideologies of Lived Space in Literary Texts*. As regards the debate and critical frame of the 'spatial turn', see Kong 1990, 2001, and 2010; Knott 2008 and 2010. Following a consideration of the impact of the late twentieth-century spatial turn on the study of religion by geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and religious studies scholars, two trends are distinguished: the poetics of place and the sacred; and politics, religion, and the contestation of space. On the recent tendency to confront methodologies such as the spatial turn and uses of memory, see also the very latest work by Elena Franchi (2023), who investigates the role of memory in space studies and especially the role of space in memory studies, by examining, in particular, the research that gave rise to the spatial turn and attempting to reconstruct 'the spatial turn before the spatial turn' from the analysis of scholars such as Lucio Gambi, Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault.

[6] Plat. *Resp.* 1, 327a-328a.

[7] Cf. Vegetti 2007, 200.

variety of evil customs»; it constitutes a «very bitter and salty proximity».[8] In the psychosomatic topography traced by *Timaeus* (69d), Piraeus would undoubtedly correspond to the lower zones, separated from the rational acropolis of the head by the isthmus formed by the neck. In the *Timaeus*, in fact, Plato proposes the great fresco of the composition of the soul, structuring it in higher areas («more near to the head») and lower areas («more far from the head»), since one part thereof is better, and one worse, according to the passions and emotional orientations that follow or by which passions are guided. And, in describing the functional and morphological articulation of the passions animating the «mortal part of the soul» (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς θνητὸν γένος), the Athenian philosopher plays with spatial metaphors in terms of «isthmus» (ἰσθμός) and «boundary» (ὅρος), and «acropolis of reason» (ἐκ τῆς ἀκροπόλεως τῷ τ᾽ ἐπιτάγματι καὶ λόγῳ μηδαμῇ πείθεσθαι ἑκὸν ἐθέλοι).[9]

In the *Republic*, Socrates' descent into Piraeus is motivated both by the desire to honour the goddess and to observe the spectacle of the processions (θεάσασθαι), as φιλοθεάμων («fond of seeing», as to say fond of knowledge) as he is.[10] Socrates is in search of knowledge, he is not yet the φιλοθεάμων τῆς ἀληθείας (= φιλόσοφος) of *Resp.* 5, 479a. The *asty* from which he descends to Piraeus is the confused Athens of its time, illuminated by the light of the nocturnal day referred to in *Resp.* 7, 521c, the life that one leads there is the 'impure' one of the first Orphic cycle.[11] From the point of view of an initiatory path, Piraeus, to which the 'beginning initiate' Socrates descends, should represent the place of revelation, but there is no revelation of a prophetic goddess to make Socrates wise, and thus *philosophos*. The conquest of knowledge is achieved through observation, inquiry, dialectical confrontation with the lower areas of the *polis* (as well as of the soul), with its mixed population (= mixed passions), its foreign traditions, its political-ideological conflicts. «If he wants to educate the city, Socrates must first descend into its depths, learn from it, allow himself to be refuted».[12] In the symbolic economy of the dialogue, both the place and the occasion, as well as the crowd of characters that Socrates meets, take on a profound meaning.

The figures in the foreground represent the entire social and cultural spectrum of the *polis*: with them Socrates must confront himself in the conflict between reciprocal refutations and in the clash of cultures.[13] In the background of the Socratic descent is the crowd of Thracians,[14] bearers of warrior valour,

[8] Plat. *Leg.* 2, 704d.

[9] Plat. *Tim.* 69c-70a.

[10] See Proclus' use of this word, *philotheamon*, in the opening of the *Hypotyposis*. As regards the category of *philotheamones*, cf. *Resp.* 5, 475d-e.

[11] Cf. Plat. *Phaed.* 66b.

[12] Vegetti 2007, 40. See Plat. *Resp.* 1, 328c.

[13] Cf. Vegetti 2007, 41.

[14] These are the same Thracians who, together with metics and slaves, are said to have provided valuable support for the democratic forces of Thrasybulus in the clashes of 404/3 BC; see Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.24-25; [Arist.] *Ath. Resp.* 40.2; *IG* II^2 10.

dominated by τὸ θυμοειδές, the «choleric spirit […] formed in the city from the private individuals who have this very name, such as the inhabitants of Thrace and Scythia and the northern regions in general» (particularly noted for their warlike tendencies and bloody and cruel customs),[15] conceived as opposed to the «love of knowledge (τὸ φιλομαθές), which can be attributed [instead] to our country».[16]

From the Platonic text, the area of Bendis appears to be regulated by a dense series of rules that, if on the one hand sanction its «autonomous cultic existence, recognised and accepted by the city in its own forms», on the other hand highlight «the conscious ethnic distance»[17] reflected in Plato's differentiation between τὸ θυμοειδές and τὸ φιλομαθές. The ritual described by Plato finds correspondence in the inscription sanctioning the privilege granted to the Thracians with the concession of land for the construction of a sanctuary or temple, formally legitimised by the oracle of Dodona.[18] The inscription punctually reports the ritual route of the two solemn processions from the Pritaneum (the spiritual centre of the city) to Piraeus, with a stop at the Nymphaion where purification took place, and a shared meal was organised in the sanctuary. Then the offer of πέπλος, the ritual λαμπάς on a horse and παννυχίς, the sacrifice of oxen and cows, the sharing of meat, and the offering of the skins of the victims were celebrated. The cult was regulated by the ἐπιμεληταί, who received the people who wanted to give a sacrifice at the Nymphaion, thus ensuring that all the rituals took place «according to Thracian custom». Finally, the *lex sacra* established the tributes, fines, and fees to be paid to the sanctuary. In its formal articulation, the symbolism of the ritual is functional to the context in which the cult of Bendis is received, revealing elements of continuity with the city's major festive celebration, the Panathenaia, with which the ritual of Bendis shares the symposiac moment, the *peplos* offering, and the sacrifices, although these elements are elaborated in an autonomous manner, and they were enriched with their own symbolic value. While elsewhere in Greece the cult of Bendis is not attested, in Athens it is perfectly framed within the celebrations and ritual practices of foreigner people, especially Thracians and Phrygians, who are mentioned also by Strabo.[19]

3. The *Republic* as a metic space

This discourse proceeds between identity, memory, and spatiality: the third element involves the Spatial Turn, a subject that has also interested the study of ancient cultures in the last years. In our case, it consists in the programmatic stigmatisation of a real *lieu de mémoire* (in this case, the Mounichia guard hill at

[15] Cf. Hdt. 5.3-6 (about the Thracians); 4.46.2-3 and 4.64-66 (about the Scythians).
[16] Plat. *Resp.* 4, 435e.
[17] Montepaone 1999, 173 and nn. 64, 65.
[18] *IG* II² 1283.
[19] Strab. 10.3.16 and 18.

Piraeus), filtered through a rhetorical construction once again decisively entrusted to the discursive strategies of emotional logics. At the core of the matter, we find the 'dangers' of connectivity.

As reflected in the long and emblematic speeches of Pericles reported by Thucydides,[20] even at the height of his maritime *imperium* Athens evokes its own image of autocracy,[21] with the exclusivity of civic status and demarcation of its religious, social, and territorial borders.[22] In this perspective, even the adoption of foreign cults seemed to provide evidence of the way the Athenians implemented skilful strategies of control and preservation of these frontiers, making the border areas the space of mediation between a sense of belonging and territorial appropriation, where the discourse on the acquisition and definition of identity necessarily passes through the confrontation and recognition (co-optation-absorption) of diversity (i.e., 'Rhetoric of Otherness').[23]

At the end of the 5th century BC, the Piraeus represents, in the rhetoric of the traditional anti-democratic elite, not only a political damage, but an actual religious problem, a *sacrilegium*, that contributes with its example to highlighting the cultural limits of the very concept of citizenship, essential for the self-awareness of the *polis* conceived as κοινωνία.[24] The stigmatisation of the harbour, that is seen as a geographical and symbolic entity, becomes, on the contrary, a leitmotiv of the oligarchic propaganda opposed to democratic regimes, and as a central problem of intellectual reflection on the idea of democracy and good government that will find its most accomplished expression in Plato. In the perspective of the historical revisionism of the first decades of the 4th century BC, the Athenian philosopher underlines the danger of the proximity of a city to the sea[25] – perceived as a constant element of *stasis* –, and he identifies the Piraeus as a place of strong social disconnection, a harbinger of civil tensions and a severe threat to the stability and structural integrity of the *polis*.[26] Plato himself appeals to the authority of Homeric tradition in support of his ideas,

[20] Thuc. 1.140-144 and 2.35-46.

[21] The important reference to autocracy in Pericles' speeches quoted by Thucydides alludes to the vision of power (grounded on the triad *somata*, *chremata*, *gnome/xynesis*) embodied by the statesman, belied, however, by the developments of the war as the Athenian historian presents them to us. See, for example, Rechenauer 2011.

[22] Loraux 1981, 42-44; 180-202; 328-338.

[23] von Reden 1995, 32-35.

[24] Cf. Hall 1989; Cartledge 1993.

[25] Polanyi 1977, 189-199 (for the discussion on ancient Athens within the transcultural theory of socio-economic exchange): market and trade in Athens not they have nothing in common: the market (ἀγορά) is a place of reciprocity and redistribution (i.e., a form of exchange rooted in political and social institutions and therefore confined to the members of one political and social community); trade takes place 'outside' political areas and is oriented to economic, 'a-social' profit: the separation of the two spheres arises from the terminological distinction between 'trade' and 'retail trade', for which the ἔμπορος (trade on the sea) is different from κάπηλος (retail trade, acted in the *agora*): it is a distinction which concerns not only two activities, but also two locations, the city ἀγορά and the port (cf. Polanyi 1977, 190-191, and 1960, 329-335).

[26] Plat. *Leg.* 4, 705a; cf. 707a-b.

stating in *Leges* (4, 706d-e): «In Homer [*Il.* 14.96-102], in fact, Odysseus insults Agamemnon when the latter, as the Achaeans are dominated in battle by the Trojans, orders the ships to be driven into the sea».

For the same reason, the democratic policy of Themistocles, the creator of the μεταβολή of Athens, who was accused of having transformed noble warriors, steadfast hoplites, into men of the sea, vile galley slaves (ἀντὶ πεζῶν ὁπλιτῶν μονίμων ναυτικοὺς γενομένους ἐθισθῆναι), is not considered in a positive manner.[27] In this perspective, Plato's critique seems to explicitly refer to the social enlargement operation started by Themistocles and pursued by the democratic-demagogic policy of Pericles and his successors.[28] The philosopher's democratic defence for the preservation of the civic corpus to which he belonged, therefore, stands in open antithesis to the strategist's demagogic policy aimed at increasing social strength, understood as the policy of increasing human potential, on the military level, and the policy of alliance with foreign kings, on the diplomatic one. The conflict, in ideological terms, shows political reason, which for Plato must coincide with the good of the *polis*, against the reason of state, which for Themistocles coincides with what is useful to the *polis*.

A similar perspective already emerged in the verses of the Euripides' *Hippolytus* (752-763), brought to the stage in 428 BC, where Athens is presented as the «land without borders» (763: ἄπειρος γῆ), an expression that rhetorically plays with the double meaning of ἄπειρος as «limitless, boundless, borderless» (from πέρας) but, also, «inexperienced, ignorant, clueless» (from πεῖρᾰ, i.e., unable to assess the 'negative' consequences or to remedy them). In the second half of the 4th century BC, the Aristotelian remark on Piraeus as an obstacle to the political unity of the city seems to pertain not only to the period of the oligarchy, but also to that of the so-called radical democracy, raising conceptual problems related to the attempted reconciliation of the port – traditionally conceived as a peripheral space (with all that this entails) – to the ideology of the *polis*.[29]

4. Strategies of emotional stigmatisation of a *lieu de mémoire*

In the communicative strategies adopted by a certain rhetoric, it is highly probable that the negative interpretation of Piraeus as a place of *stasis* is also linked to the recovery of the mythical tradition of the ancient Epimenidian prophecy about Mounichia. This prophecy is ascribed, among other interpretations, to the oligarchic propaganda that flourished at the time of the *krisis* of the post-Periclean

[27] Plat. *Leg.* 4, 706b-c; cf. Plut. *Them.* 4.4 and *Phil.* 14.3.

[28] «Nowhere do we find figurations of metics with the prominence or historical specificity that we do in the *Republic*. Plato's dialogue unfolds in Piraeus, the Athenian harbor synonymous with empire, merchants, travel, importation, and immigrant residence. […] In the grand scheme of the *Republic*'s argumentation, this setting is marginally visible. Yet, as a dramatic conceit, it bears a crucial theoretical insight» (Kasimis 2018, 51).

[29] Arist. *Pol.* 7, 1327a11-20.

programme,[30] which in the space of a decade added to the disaster of the Sicilian expedition the defeat in the Peloponnesian War and the dissolution of the Delian League. According to the account reported in imperial times in Plutarch's *Life of Solon* and later taken up in the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laërtius, the *kathartes* of Crete Epimenides Festius was called to Athens at the time of Solon to purify the city from the *sacrilegium* of the Alcmaeonids[31] – who was pointed out by tradition as the main culprits of the ancient massacre of the Cilonians that had preceded the legislature of Draco. Looking at length at the hill near Piraeus, he would have admonished the Athenians reminding them how blind man was about the future. The Athenians themselves, if had known how much trouble that stronghold would bring to their city, would have torn it apart with their teeth.[32]

In the words of Epimenides, the difficult question of the danger of a place constantly threatened by the danger of relapsing into *stasis*, undermining the idea of social justice and concord in favour of which Epimenides himself had worked so hard,[33] is evoked with prophetic imagery. On the theme of justice, the observations of Tzetzes in his commentary on Aristophanes' *Pluto* are interesting, since referring to the Epimenides' prophecy, taken up regarding the meaning of an expression – the god made 'blind' by Zeus out of envy towards 'men of valour' – is charged with a deeper moral significance.[34] Byzantine exegete specifies, in fact, that just as Pluto is blind in that he does not see righteous men, so they do not see him, since they are not concerned with wealth, but rather with virtue. Referring to the righteous, *typhlos* takes on the meaning of «not prescient», but also «blameless».[35]

In the *Life of Solon*, the example of Mounichia is thus brought back into the groove of the opposition between 'righteous men' (οἱ δίκαιοι, σοφοί, κοσμίοι: «the just, the wise, the men of ordered life»), the Athenians, with sound moral values, and 'the unrighteous' (οἱ πονηροί). From the words of the Cretan soothsayer, moreover, it emerges all the discontent and aversion (naturally instrumentalised) towards a specific political class and a specific power group, such as that represented by the sacrilegious *genos* of the Alcmaeonids – traditionally held responsible for the massacre of the Cilonians – who had made domination over the sea the main idea of their government programme,[36] taking the effects of the institutional change introduced by Themistocles to the extreme conse-

[30] Federico 2001, 125 and n. 169. For an overview of the various interpretations of the prophecy, see Demoulin 1901, 104-106; Manfredini, Piccirilli 1977, 161.

[31] [Arist.] *Ath. Resp.* 1; Plut. *Sol.* 12.4.

[32] Plut. *Sol.* 12.6-10. See Manfredini, Piccirilli 1977, 137-139.

[33] On the theme of social concord, see Pòrtulas 2002.

[34] Tzetz. *Proleg. in Aristoph. Plu.* 90b, pp. 31-32 Massa Positano.

[35] Aristoph. *Plu.* 87-98.

[36] Just recall the speech of Alcibiades in the thucydidean passage 7.17.7-8. During the Peloponnesian War the Spartans, to discredit Pericles, came back to remember the story of the family curse. Like his predecessors, Alcibiades too tried to ally with the Persians after being accused of impiety.

quences. To fully understand the way of thinking that Plutarch evokes in his *Life of Solon*, one should recall that it by-passes entirely a set of ideas which had already attained, at the time of Solon, a wide influence over Greece generally and over Athens in particular: the conception of justice in terms of religious pollution, where «the stain, a source of public danger, creates a public interest which requires the compulsory intervention of central authority».[37]

In Diogenes Laërtius, the story of Epimenides' κάθαρσις is displayed in an apparently more neutral manner – leaving aside the episode of the *sacrilegium* – against the backdrop of the terrible plague that struck the city of Athens at the time of Solon.[38] Rather than for his divinatory ability in the past, the Cretan is called to Athens, by order of the Pythian oracle, for his reputation of θεοφιλέστατος.[39]

Being a discourse based on memory, the tale of the alleged Epimenidian prophecy calls into question a deeper and more complex political reflection on the domination of the sea and the evolution of a principle of democracy linked, on the one hand, to the sudden rise and fall of eminent individualities and, on the other, to the relationship between *demos* and institutional power.[40] Moreover, it is a discourse that cannot disregard the interaction between memory and education, since for centuries the *polis* educated its children in the nautical art (τέχνη ναυτική) rooted in the will of the fathers and essential to the foundation and preservation of the empire, annually renewing with official commemorations celebrated at Piraeus/Mounichia the memory of the victory at Salamis, on occasion of which the Athenians imposed themselves as «saviours of Hellas» (σωτῆρας γενέσθαι τῆς Ἑλλάδος)[41] and laid the groundwork for the construction of their common identity.[42]

[37] Vlastos 1946, 66-67. The concept of 'pollution' is closely related to the idea of 'ancestral guilt' (or, more usually, 'hereditary guilt' or, again, 'ancestral curse'), which, in the classical period, is politically relevant in Athens because of the alleged impurity of the Alcmaeonids: it is a set of ideas particularly suited to tragedy and Herodotus' concern for causally linking events over time. It cannot be called a belief exactly, since each manifestation is different, although especially in tragedy each unfolding of an ancestral form of guilt depends on previous ones. Only after the classical period it is systematized and implicit theology becomes explicit; it is a cultural concept that can be named, but there is no doctrine. A relevant bibliography has developed on this topic in recent years: see, for example, Gagné 2013.

[38] Diog. Laert. 1.110.

[39] Diog. Laert. 1.114.

[40] Camassa 2007, 111.

[41] Hdt. 7.139.

[42] Probably by the end of the fifth century BC (when Athenian democracy was restored), or perhaps later, in the course of the fourth century (after Athens defeat in the Peloponnesian War or under the Macedonian domination), the Athenian youths were annually involved in official celebrations of the victory that the fleet of Themistocles had obtained on the Persian invaders, by playing a ritual naumachia, aboard sacred boats, in the small harbor of Mounichia at Piraeus. This tradition is testified by epigraphic sources from the Hellenistic until the Roman imperial age. See Viscardi 2013. On the memorialization policies activated in response to the establishment of oligarchic regimes throughout the political and social history of the *polis*, see also Shear 2011, 14: the reaction to the oligarchy includes not only literature and oratory, but also «inscribed documents, the buildings, monuments, and spaces of the city and the city's public rituals».

The narrative choice of entrusting the memory of Mounichia to words of prophecy, pronounced by a master of truth such as Epimenides, presupposes the intention of delegitimising a tradition by using the same discursive-communicative instrument of incontrovertible truthfulness on which this tradition had founded its authority. The ancient prophecy of Epimenides pointed to the Mounichian promontory as the source of atrocious and incontrovertible evils for the *polis*, against the ancient prophecy of Bacis, who had made the stronghold at Piraeus the extreme bastion of Athens' highest and noblest values. The construction, and perhaps even more so the revival in the midst of the imperial era, of such a rhetorical project – which made the prophetic discourse instrumental to political reflection on the justice and social concord of Athens (Epimenides' prophecy), against the other prophetic discourse on the freedom and salvation of Greece as a whole (Bacis' prophecy) – betrays the precise will to stigmatise a place of memory that was elevated to the rank of sign and that fulfils, as we have seen, a central function in the collective and cultural mnemonics of the *polis* (or in what has been defined as the 'culture of remembrance') acting as the medium of the cultural memory of the *polis* itself.[43] A *polis* whose physiognomy would have radically changed in the aftermath of the project implemented by Themistocles, who, as Plutarch recalls, considering the advantage represented by the harbours, would have pushed the city towards the sea, in contravention of the political systems of the ancient kings who preceded him (τοῖς παλαιοῖς βασιλεῦσι τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἀντιπολιτευόμενος).[44] The incidence of the role played by the emotional dimension attributed to the harbour becomes emblematic as it is connected to two of the most significant moments in the history of Athens: the birth of hegemony over the sea, marked by the first great naval victory in 480 BC, and the establishment of the «present constitution» (ἡ νῦν κατάστασις τῆς πολιτείας),[45] introduced in the aftermath of the 404/3 BC clashes, «when the occupants of Piraeus and Mounichia, after all the democrats had gone over to their side, defeated the Thirty and their rescuers in battle».[46] By this way, the discussion on the spatial emotional division between the Acropolis and Piraeus,

[43] On the theory of spatialization and reconstructiveness of memory (i.e., the continuous reorganization of the past dictated by changing social frames of reference), concretely understood in relation to the identity of the real and living human group, which constitutes itself as a 'community of memory' by preserving the past in specificity and duration, see Assmann 1992, 14-17. For the concept of *mnemotope*, understood as «punctuation in space, capable of activating processes of remembrance», favoring the construction of paths of exemplarity for the present, cf. *ibid*., 33-34: «Not only every epoch, but also every group – that is, every religious address – localizes and monumentalizes his specific memories according to a precise manner». More examples of 'commemorative landscape' (form of expression of collective memory) they recognize themselves in the totemic landscapes of the Australian aborigines (Strehlow 1970) or in the representation of Rome as a 'sacred landscape' (Cancik 1985-1986), or in the «topographie légendaire» of the Holy Land as it has described in Halbwachs 1941.

[44] Plut. *Them.* 19.2-4.

[45] [Arist.] *Ath. Resp.* 42.1.

[46] [Arist.] *Ath. Resp.* 38.1-3; see, also, for reference, *Ath. Resp.* 37.

embedded in the distinction of the social body between Athenian citizens and foreigners resident at the harbour, and embodied into the civic corpus through the contrast between τὸ θυμοειδές and τὸ φιλομαθές, calls into question the discourse analysis and strategies of acculturation that provide for a growing control over emotions conveyed by the shaping and reshaping of cultural memory within the increasingly powerful policies of collective identities' construction and self-building processes of the Athenian social man. Coming back to the Platonic dialogue from which we started, the whole enterprise of the philosophical narration of the genesis of the *polis* and the re-education of citizens is placed under the sign of mythical storytelling,[47] of a discourse which, ultimately, tells things from their beginnings (τῷ λόγῳ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ποιῶμεν πόλιν), and, by telling them, is able to «create the *polis*» (ποιήσει δὲ αὐτήν)[48] and forge in the discourse the character, understood as a complex of emotions, of its men (λόγῳ παιδεύωμεν τοὺς ἄνδρας).[49]

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[47] Cf. Vegetti 2007, 63.

[48] Plat. *Resp.* 2, 369c.

[49] Plat. *Resp.* 2, 376d-e.

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