

Identity Leadership, *hybris*, and the Paradox of Alcibiades

(A) Social Identity Theory of Leadership

1. ‘Traditionally, leadership research ... has been devoted to the task of discovering the personal traits and qualities that mark out great leaders ... For us, the psychology of effective leadership is never about “I.” It is not about identifying or extolling the “special stuff” that sets some apart from others and projects them into positions of power and influence. For us, effective leadership is always about how leaders and followers come to see each other as part of a common team or group – as members of the same *in-group*. It therefore has little to do with the individuality of the leader and everything to do with whether they are seen as part of the team, as a team player, as able and willing to advance team goals. Leadership, in short, is very much a “we thing.”’

Four principles:

- (1) Being one of us
- (2) Doing it for us
- (3) Crafting a sense of us
- (4) Making us matter

(Haslam, Reicher, & Platow 2011, xxi-xxii)

(B) Aspects of Athenian Identity

B1. The Athenians as imperialists

The Athenians and Sicily

2. During the same winter the Athenians wished (*eboulonto*) to sail again to Sicily with a larger armament than that conducted by Laches and Eurymedon, and subdue it (*katastrepsasthai*), if they could.... (Thuc. 6.1.1)
3. Such was the magnitude of the island which the Athenians were bent upon (*hōrmēnto*) invading. To give the truest explanation, they were eager (*ephiemenoi*) to attain to empire (*arxai*) of the whole of it... (Thuc. 6.6.1)
4. Nicias, ... thought the city had not come to a right decision, but that, with a slight and specious pretext, it was the conquest of all Sicily, a great undertaking, at which they aimed (*ephiesthai*)... (Thuc. 6.8.4)

Attitudes of the Athenian assembly during the Sicilian debate

5. Thus Nicias spoke. Most of the Athenians that came forward advised the people to make the expedition and not to rescind the vote, while some spoke against it. (Thuc. 6.15.1)
6. Thus Alcibiades spoke. After hearing him and the Eggestaeans and some Leontine exiles ... the Athenians were far more eager for the expedition than before (*pollō mallon ē proteron hōrmēnto strateuein*). (Thuc. 6.19.1)
7. “Since I see, men of Athens, that you are wholly bent upon the expedition (*pantōs hōrmēmenous strateuein*)...” (Thuc. 6.20.1)
8. They, however, were not diverted from their eagerness for the voyage by reason of the burdensomeness of the equipment, but were far more bent upon it (*poly de mallon hōrmēnto*); and the result was just the opposite of what he had expected. (Thuc. 6.24.2)
9. And upon all alike there fell an eager desire (*erōs*) to sail... (Thuc. 6.24.3)
10. And so, on account of the exceeding eagerness of the majority (*dia tēn agan tōn pleonōn epithymian*), even if anyone was not satisfied, he held his peace, in the fear that if he voted in opposition he might seem to be disloyal to the state. (Thuc. 6.24.4)

The Athenian demos as rulers over others

11. Conducted as it was by many able men, the plot not unnaturally succeeded, even though it was an arduous task; for it was difficult, after the lapse of almost one hundred years since the tyrants had been overthrown, to deprive of their liberty

the Athenian people (*ton Athēnaiōn dēmon*), who had been, not only not subject to anyone else, but for more than half of that period had themselves been accustomed (*eiōthota*) to rule over (*archein*) others. (Thuc. 8.68.4)

B2. The Athenians as an aristocratic people

Athenian autochthony

12. [Our ancestors] had not been collected, like most nations, from every quarter, and had not settled in a foreign land after driving out its people: they were born of the soil, and possessed in one and the same country their mother and their fatherland. They were the first and the only people in that time to drive out the ruling classes of their state and to establish a democracy, believing the liberty of all to be the strongest bond of agreement; by sharing with each other the hopes born of their perils they had freedom of soul in their civic life, and used law for honouring the good and punishing the evil. For they deemed that it was the way of wild beasts to be held subject to one another by force, but the duty of men to delimit justice by law, to convince by reason, and to serve these two in act by submitting to the sovereignty of law and the instruction of reason. (Lys. 2.17-19)
13. But since it fell to their lot also to have been nobly born and strictly brought up and to have lived with lofty ideals, because of all which they had every reason to be good men (*spoudaioi*), I should be ashamed if I were found to have passed over any of these topics. I shall begin from the origin of their race. The nobility of birth (*eugeneia*) of these men has been acknowledged from time immemorial by all mankind. For it is possible for them and for each one of their remote ancestors man by man to trace back their being, not only to a physical father, but also to this land of theirs as a whole, a common possession, of which they are acknowledged to be the indigenous children. For alone of all mankind they settled the very land from which they were born and handed it down to their descendants, so that justly one may assume that those who came as migrants into their cities and are denominated citizens of the same are comparable to adopted children; but these men are citizens of their native land by right of legitimate birth. (Dem. 60.3-4)

Words and deeds

14. Beyond all compare did those men in their valour surpass all mankind, whether in their counsels or in the perils of that war; for they abandoned their city and embarked on their ships, and pitted their own few lives against the multitude of Asia. (Lys. 2.40)
15. And we Athenians decide public questions for ourselves or at least endeavour to arrive at a sound understanding of them, in the belief that it is not debate that is a hindrance to action, but rather not to be instructed by debate (*logōi*) before the time comes for action (*ergōi*). (Thuc. 2.40.2)

B3. The Athenians as ‘middling’ citizens

Aeschines on the attributes of the *dēmotikos anēr*

16. Yes, but he is a friend of the people (*dēmotikos*)! If now you attend only to the plausible sound of his words, you will be deceived as in the past; but if you look at his character and the truth, you will not be deceived. Call him to account in this way: with your help I will reckon up what ought to be the inborn qualities of the “friend of the people” (*dēmotikō andri*) and the orderly (*sōphroni*) citizen; and over against them I will set down what manner of man one would expect the oligarch and the worthless (*phaulon*) man to be. And I ask you to compare the two and to see to which class he belongs—not by his professions, but by his life. I think you would all acknowledge that the following qualities ought to be found in the “friend of the people”: in the **first** place, he should be free-born, on both his father’s and his mother’s side, lest because of misfortune of birth he be disloyal to the laws that preserve the democracy. In the **second** place, he should have as a legacy from his ancestors some service which they have done to the democracy, or at the very least there must be no inherited enmity against it, lest in the attempt to avenge the misfortunes of his family he undertake to injure the city. **Thirdly**, he ought to be temperate and self-restrained in his daily life, lest to support his wanton extravagance he take bribes against the people. **Fourthly**, he ought to be a man of good judgment (*eugnōmona*) and an able speaker; for it is well that his discernment choose the wisest course, and his training in rhetoric and his eloquence persuade the hearers; but if he cannot have both, good judgment is always to be preferred to eloquence of speech. **Fifthly**, he ought to be a man of brave heart, that in danger and peril he may not desert the people. But the oligarch we should expect to have all the opposite qualities. (Aesch. 3.168-70)

Self-restraint – Not yielding to appetites

17. Timarchus did not hesitate, but submitted to it all, though he had income enough to satisfy all reasonable desires (*tōn metriōn*). For his father had left him a very large property, which he has squandered, as I will show in the course of my speech. But he behaved as he did because he was a slave to the most shameful lusts (*hēdonais*), to gluttony and extravagance at table, to flute-girls and harlots, to dice, and to all those other things no one of which ought to have the mastery over a man who is well-born (*gennaion*) and free (*eleutheron*). (Aesch. 1.42)
18. “It is not I who am going to kill you, but our city’s law, which you have transgressed and regarded as of less account than your pleasures, choosing rather to commit this foul offence against my wife and my children than to obey the laws like a decent (*kosmios*) person.” (Lys. 1.26)

Patriotism – Civic-mindedness

19. There are two traits, men of Athens, that mark the disposition of the well-meaning citizen (*ton physei metrion politēn*);— that is a description I may apply to myself without offence. When in power, the constant aim of his policy should be the honour and the ascendancy of his country; and on every occasion and in all business he should preserve his loyalty (*eunoian*). (Dem. 18.321)

Avoidance of extravagance – Use of private wealth to perform public liturgies

20. But I have never in the past emulated the habits (*diatribas*) of Demosthenes, nor am I ashamed of my own, nor would I wish unsaid the words which I have spoken in your presence, nor would I care to live had my public speeches been like his. As to my silence, Demosthenes, it has been caused by the moderation (*metriotēs*) of my life. For a little money suffices me, and I have no shameful lust for more (*meizonōn aischrōs*). Both my silence and my speech are therefore the result of deliberation, not of the impulse of a spendthrift nature (*tēs en tē physei dapanēs*). (Aesch. 3.218)
21. Again, Apollodorus himself did not, like Pronapes, assess his property below its value, but, paying taxes as a knight, aspired to hold the offices open to that rank, nor did he seek to possess himself by violence of the property of others and think that you ought to have no advantage from his wealth, but he openly declared the amount of his fortune and met whatever demands for service you made upon him, and wronging no man he tried to live honourably on his own fortune, considering that he ought to be moderate in his personal expenditure (ta metria analiskein) and dedicate the surplus to the service of the state, so that it might meet its expenses. As a result of these principles, what public service did he fail perfectly to discharge? To what war-tax was he not among the first to contribute? What duty has he ever failed to perform? When he undertook the provision of a choir of boys, he was victorious in the competition, and the well-known tripod still stands as a memorial of his honourable ambition. And what is the duty of a respectable (*metrion*) citizen? Was it not his duty, while others were trying to take by force what did not belong to them, to do no such thing himself but to try and preserve what was his own? Is it not his duty, when the state needs money, to be among the first to contribute and not to conceal any part of his fortune? Such then was Apollodorus; and you would make a just return for his services if you ratified his intentions as to the disposal of his own property. (Isaeus 7.39-41)

Respect of social norms – Avoidance of behaviour that gives offence

22. No man in the world has ever seen us drunken (*paroinountes*) or committing outrages (*hybrizontes*), and I hold that I am doing nothing unfeeling in demanding to receive satisfaction according to the law for the wrongs I have suffered. This man’s sons are welcome, so far as I am concerned, to be Ithyphalli and Autolecythi; I only pray the gods that these things and all things like them may recoil upon Conon and his sons; for they are those who initiate one another with the rites of Ithyphallus, and indulge in acts which decent (*metrious*) people cannot even speak of without deep disgrace (*aischunēn*), to say nothing of performing them. (Dem. 54.16-17)
23. I therefore request you, gentlemen of the jury, to hold the same opinion of me now as you have held hitherto, and not only to remember my public services to the State, but also to bear in mind my private propensities (*tōn idiōn epitēdeumatōn*). Consider that the most onerous of public services is to maintain throughout one’s life an orderly (*kosmion*) and self-respecting (*sōphrona*) behaviour, neither overcome by pleasure (*hēdonēs*) nor elated by gain (*kerdous*), but evincing such a character that one is free from complaint or the thought of a prosecution in the mind of any fellow-citizen. (Lys. 21.19)

hybris conjoined with licentiousness and drinking

24. Had he killed his victim accidentally, he would have deserved some measure of mercy. But he wantonly committed a brutal assault (*hybrei de kai akolasia*) upon an old man when in his cups (*paroinōn*); he struck him and throttled him until he robbed him of life. So for killing him he is liable to the penalties prescribed for murder: and for violating every right to respect enjoyed by the aged he deserves to suffer in full the punishment usual in such cases. (Ant. 4.a.6)

(C) Alcibiades and Athenian Identity

C1. Imperialism: Alcibiades as a prototypical Athenian

Alcibiades and the Sicilian expedition

25. But most zealous in urging (*enēge de prothymotata*) the expedition was Alcibiades son of Cleinias, wishing as he did to oppose Nicias, because, along with their general political disagreement, Nicias had made invidious reference to him, and above all he was eager to be made general and hoped thereby to subdue both Sicily and Carthage, and in case of success to promote at the same time his private interests in wealth as well as in glory. (Thuc. 6.15.2)

Alcibiades on empire

26. “It was in this way that we acquired our empire (*archēn*)—both we and all others that have ever won empire (*ērxan*)—by coming zealously to the aid of those, whether barbarians or Hellenes, who have at any time appealed to us; whereas, if we should all keep quiet or draw distinctions of race as to whom we ought to assist, we should add but little to our empire and should rather run a risk of losing that empire itself. For against a superior one does not merely defend oneself when he attacks, but even takes precaution that he shall not attack at all. And it is not possible for us to exercise a careful stewardship of the limits we would set to our empire (*archein*); but, since we are placed in this position, it is necessary to plot against some and not let go our hold upon others, because there is a danger of coming ourselves under the empire of others (*archthēnai*), should we not ourselves hold empire (*archoimen*) over other peoples.” (Thuc. 6.18.2-3)
27. “In short, I declare that a state which is accustomed to activity would very quickly be ruined by a change to inactivity,…” (Thuc. 6.18.7)
28. “Calculating, then, that we shall rather strengthen our power here if we go over there, let us make the voyage, that we may lay low the haughty spirit (*phronēma*) of the Peloponnesians, as we shall if we let men see that in contempt of (*hyperidontes*) our present peaceful condition we even sail against Sicily… (Thuc. 6.18.4)

Alcibiades’ *phronēma*

29. As now the Lacedaemonians were thus at variance with the Athenians, the party at Athens that wished to annul the treaty at once became urgent in pressing their views. To this party belonged, among others, Alcibiades son of Cleinias, a man who, though as regards his age he would in any other city have been accounted even at that time as still young, was held in honour on account of the worth of his ancestors (*axiōmati progonōn timōmenos*). To him it seemed really to be better to side with the Argives; it was not that alone, however, for he also opposed the treaty because he was piqued in his pride (*phronēmati philonikōn*) because the Lacedaemonians had negotiated it through Nicias and Laches, overlooking (*hyperidontes*) him on account of his youth and not showing him the respect (*ou timēsantes*) that was due him on account of the old proxy that once existed in his family… (Thuc. 5.43.1-2)

C2. Thucydides’ assessment of Alcibiades

30. For being held in high esteem (*en axiōmati*) by his townsmen, he indulged desires beyond (*meizosin*) his actual means, in keeping horses as well as in his other expenses. And it was precisely this sort of thing that most of all later destroyed the Athenian state. For the masses, afraid (*phobēthentes*) of the greatness (*megethos*) of his lawless (*paranomias*) and sensual self-indulgence (*kata to heautou sōma*) in his manner of living (*es tēn diaitan*), as also of his designs (*dianoias*) as revealed in every single intrigue in which he was involved, became hostile (*polemioi*) to him on the ground that he was aiming at a tyranny; and, though publicly he managed the affairs of the war most excellently, in his private life every man had been offended (*achthesthentes*) at his practices (*epitēdeumasin*), and so entrusting the city to other hands after no long time they brought it to ruin. (Thuc. 6.15.3-4)

C3. Anti-prototypical Alcibiades (i): Alcibiades' *paranoia*

31. "For those things for which I am railed at bring glory to my ancestors and myself, as well as advantage to my country." (Thuc. 6.16.1)
32. "And again, although whatever display I made in the city, by providing choruses or in any other way, naturally causes jealousy among my townsmen, yet in the eyes of strangers this too gives an impression of strength. And that is no useless folly, when a man by his private expenditures benefits not himself only but also his state." (Thuc. 6.16.3)
33. Phrynichus, however, who was still general, did not find them at all satisfactory, but was of opinion that Alcibiades had really no more desire for an oligarchy than for a democracy, and had no other object in view than in some manner, by bringing about in the state a change from its present order, to secure his own return at the invitation of his party associates. (Thuc. 8.48.4)
34. Accordingly, information was given by certain metics and serving-men, not indeed about the statues of Hermes, but to the effect that before this there had been certain mutilations of other statues perpetrated by younger men in drunken sport (*meta paidias kai oinou*), and also that the mysteries were being performed in private houses in mockery (*eph' hybrei*); and Alcibiades, among others, was implicated in the charges. They were taken up by those who were most jealous of him as an obstacle in the way of their secure preeminence among the people; and these men, thinking that if they could get rid of him they would have first place, magnified the matter and shouted that both the mockery of the mysteries and the mutilation of the Hermae had been committed with a view to the overthrow of the democracy, and that there was none of these things but had been done in collusion with him, citing as further proofs other instances of his undemocratic lawlessness of conduct (*tēn allēn autou es ta epitēdeumata ou dēmōtikēn paranōmian*). (Thuc. 6.28.1-2)

C4. Anti-prototypical Alcibiades (ii): Alcibiades' *dianoia*

35. "Nor is it unfair (*adikon*), either, that one who has a high opinion of himself (*eph' heautōi mega phronounta*) should refuse to be on an equality with others (*mē ison einai*), since he who fares ill finds no one to be an equal participator (*isomoirei*) in his evil plight. On the contrary, just as in misfortune we receive no greetings, in like manner let a man submit even though despised (*hyperphronoumenos*) by those who prosper (*eupragountōn*); or else, let him mete out equal measure to all, and then claim the like in turn (*antaxioutō*). I know, however, that men of this stamp (*tous toioutous*), and all others who have in any way stood out (*proeschon*) as illustrious (*lamprotēti*), are indeed in their own lifetime an offence (*lypērous ontas*), most of all to their equals, then also to others, while still among them, but that they leave behind to those who come after the claiming of kinship even where there is none; and, whatever their fatherland, to it they leave exultant pride (*auchēsin*) in them, as men who are not aliens or offenders, but who are their own and have done well." (Thuc. 6.16.4)

Aristotle on the goods of fortune and *hybris*

36. But those who without excellence have such goods [i.e., the goods of fortune, such as nobility of birth, power, and wealth] are neither justified in making great claims nor entitled to the name of 'proud' (*megalopsychoi*); for these things imply perfect excellence. Those who possess such goods are among those who become disdainful (*hyperoptai*) and insolent (*hybristai*). For without excellence it is not easy to bear gracefully the goods of fortune; and, being unable to bear them, and thinking themselves superior (*hyperechein*) to others, they despise (*kataphronousi*) others and themselves do what they please. (Aristotle, *NE* 1124a26-1124b2) (transl. W. D. Ross with alterations)

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