

## Freedom From Tyranny

Woodruff

## Freedom

- Greek's notion of political freedom arose in juxtaposition to tyranny
- Freedom for the Greeks was the right to speak in Assembly
  - Similar to our American conception of freedom of speech
    - But, for the Greeks the right to speak included the right to be heard
    - And, there was no protection for espousing unpopular or false claims
- Freedom from tyranny gives outsiders a voice in politics

## Tyranny

- Tyrant: a single ruler, group, or government which unjustly exercises absolute power
- Symptoms of tyranny (66)
  - "A tyrant is afraid of losing his position, and his decisions are affected by this fear
  - "A tyrant tries to rise above the rule of law, though he may give lip service to the law
  - "A tyrant does not accept criticism
  - "A tyrant cannot be called to account for his actions
  - "A tyrant does not listen to advice from those who do not curry favor with him, even though they may be his friends
  - "A tyrant tries to prevent those who disagree with him from participating in politics"

## Tyrant's Fear

- A tyrant is both feared by the people and fears the people
  - feared by the people because the people are never safe from harm
  - fears the people because it only takes one person to overthrow the tyrant

## Reasons For Rise of Democracy and Freedom

- Greeks did not think it was due to human nature
  - Human nature is the same for all humans
- Two possible factors (for difference between Greeks and Persians):
  - geography and culture
    - freedom from tyranny has positive influences on the culture

## Cultural Influences of Freedom

- Freedom from tyranny makes for powerful citizens and a more powerful state
  - "wherever people are not their own masters and do not rule themselves, but are under tyranny, they have no reason to train for war, and they have every reason not to appear warlike....
  - "And whatever noble and brave deeds they do, these actions serve only to strengthen and advance their tyrants, while the men themselves reap only danger and death." (unknown, 71)
- Lack of freedom leads to either weakness/political ineffectiveness or civil war

## Cultural Influences of Freedom

- Freedom from tyranny is good for political leaders
  - Freedom allows political leaders to make wise decisions based on the best information
  - Freedom allows leaders to consider the advice of friends and adversaries, unlike the tyrant

## Counterargument: Go Tyranny!

- In favor of tyrants
  - Strong leaders should not be confused with tyrants
    - In fearing tyrants, Athenians feared any strong ruler and often removed them from power
  - Tyrants can do many positive things
    - Tyrants may build strong economies, positive social systems, and increase quality of life for all citizens

## Response to Go Tyranny!

- While removing strong leaders can lead to inefficiencies, an inefficient government can serve the greater interests of the people by slowing bad legislation
  - "Distrust of leadership is the best defense of democracy...." (74)
- While a tyrant might be good some of the time, there is no guarantee that the tyrant will always work to the benefit of the people
  - Tyranny is impossible to predict and there is no recourse

## Counterargument: Athenian Freedom

- The average citizen is unable to lead wisely and is too bound to personal interests
  - Plato thought that leadership should be in the hands of philosophers (philosopher kings)
- Response
  - Plato's conception of the philosopher king is naive
  - Democratic practices protect against human weaknesses and self-interest
    - adversarial debate tests ideas and provides checks and balances