

Aristophanes' *Acharnians*:
Pursuing Peace with an Iambic Peitho

Eleni Panagiotarakou

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ABSTRACT

Aristophanes' *Acharnians*: Pursuing Peace with an Iambic Peitho

Eleni Panagiotarakou, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2009

The focus of this dissertation is the *Acharnians*, a play written in 425 BC by the comic playwright Aristophanes. This comedy, or *trupōdia* as Aristophanes refers to it, was written in the sixth year of the Peloponnesian War and revolves around the trials and tribulations of an Attic farmer named Dikaiopolis (Just Polis) in his quest for peace. Three main arguments are made in the course of this dissertation. The first is that the *Acharnians* is an anti-war/pro-peace play and not a pro-war or a neutral play. The second argument is that Dikaiopolis is a non-selfish, compassionate, conciliatory figure with a deep concern for the common good of his community. Dikaiopolis' deliberations about the war policies take place with Athens' well-being in mind. Dikaiopolis' preoccupation with his (seemingly) private welfare, I argue, is a dramatic, rhetorical ploy whose objective is to demonstrate that peace is preferable to war. My third argument is that Aristophanes had a clear intention in writing this play; the persuasion of the rural voting population, or, at the very least, the historical Acharnians, to the side of the "peace party". According to Dikaiopolis' political philosophy, the road to peace lies in a sustainable society which engages in just relations with other states. Part of that justice entails, among other things, not meddling into the affairs of other states.

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Thanks also go to my husband, Panagioti, and my children Yianni and Demetra for their patience, understanding and support. Στην οικογένεια μου στην πρώτη μου πατρίδα, Ελλάδα. Στον πατέρα μου Γιώργο, την μητέρα μου Αμαλία, και στις αδελφές μου Κωνσταντίνα, Βασιλική και Σόφια. Στη μνήμη των γιαγιάδων μου, Κωνσταντίνας και Ελένης. Στην μνήμη του παππού μου, Μανώλη; ή προσωπική του επιρροή ήταν τεράστια. Εάν ήταν επί ζωής είμαι βέβαιη ότι θα περνάγαμε αμέτρητες ώρες σε θεολογικές συζητήσεις στις οποίες μπορεί να διαφωνούσαμε επί ζήτημα φυσικής ηθικής, αλλά είμαι σίγουρη ότι θα συμφωνούσαμε επί τον τελικό στόχο; παγκόσμια ειρήνη.

DEDICATION

Στον γιό μου, Γιάννη Νικήτα και στην κόρη μου, Δήμητρα Αμαλία.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. THE POLITICIZATION OF DIONYSUS	1
1.1 Methodology	4
1.2 Why <i>Acharnians</i> and Why Now?	11
1.3 The Emergence of Democracy and Old Comedy in Athens	17
1.3.1 Dionysian Festivals & Drama	23
1.3.2 The Ritual Elements of Old Comedy	26
1.3.3 Old Comedy and the Peloponnesian War	33
1.4 Laughter & Comedy	38
CHAPTER II. A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: WAR & OLD COMEDY	42
2.1 The Peloponnesian War	42
2.2 Aristophanes' <i>Babylonians</i>	49
2.3 The <i>Acharnians</i>	54
2.3.1 The "Acharnians" and the Peloponnesian War	56
2.3.2 Aristophanes' Motivations in Naming his <i>Acharnians</i> the "Acharnians"	62
2.3.3 The <i>Acharnians</i> : Summary Plot	64
CHAPTER III. DESIRING PEACE	67
3.1 <i>Acharnians</i> ' Opening Scene: Lines 1-60	67
3.2 Overconfidence and War. The Persian Embassy: Lines 61-134	80
3.3 Self-Reliance During War: The Thracian Mercenaries: Lines 135-173	93
3.4 A Just Treason? The Making of a Private Peace: Lines 174-202	105
3.5 The Anger of the Acharnian Chorus: Lines 203-279	115
3.6 The Achilles' Heel of Persuasion: Refusal to Listen: Lines 280-392	120
3.7 In Search of a Piteous Mask: Lines 393-479	132
CHAPTER IV. PERSUASION & SPEECH	139
4.1 Dikaiopolis' Defence Speech: Lines 480-556	139
4.2 A People Divided: The Split of the Acharnian Chorus 557-625	156
4.3 Aristophanes' Apology & Thucydides' Defence: Lines 626-718	168
4.3.1. Incantational Music Song and Dance in the <i>Acharnians</i>	172
CHAPTER V. ARISTOPHANIC COMPASSION	194
5.1 The Megarian Trader: Lines 719-859	194
5.2 The Theban Trader: Lines 860-958	218
5.3 The Justice of Dionysus in Dikaiopolis' Agora: Lines 959-1068	224
5.4 The Pleasures of Peace Versus the Pains of War: Lines 1069-123	236
CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION: A RECAPULATION	251
BIBLIOGRAPHY	262
APPENDICES	275
Appendix I. The Spartan Phalanx	275
Appendix II: The Agon Between Poetry and Philosophy	278
Appendix III: Cratinus and Aristophanes	282
Appendix IV: Trugōdia	288

CHAPTER I. THE POLITICIZATION OF DIONYSUS

War is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means.

Carl von Clausewitz¹

War is not the continuation of politics with different means, it is the greatest mass-crime perpetrated on the community of man.

Alfred Adler²

The focus of this dissertation is the *Acharnians*, a play written in 425 BC by the comic poet Aristophanes. This play was written in the sixth year following the onset of the Peloponnesian War, a 27-year war between the democratic city-state of Athens and the oligarchic city-state of Sparta. The plot of the play revolves around the trials and tribulations of a peace-seeking Attic farmer, Dikaiopolis (Just-Polis). His foremost desire is to return to his pre-war lifestyle in the countryside (making the historical setting a fundamental element). The play opens onto the Athenian Assembly, an inherently political space, making the *Acharnians* our first extant political comedy in the Western tradition as well as our earliest anti-war comedy.

With the exception of Leo Strauss' insightful but short (barely 22 pages) commentary in *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1966), not much has been written about this play. Also, whatever has been written, has been for the most part critical. Classical scholars compare it to *Peace*, (421 BC) a later Aristophanic comedy, and find it lacking.

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 69.

² Alfred Adler, "Psychology of Power" *Journal of Individual Psychology* 22 (1966): 166-172, 172.

Much of what has been written about the *Acharnians* takes two forms. The first format is that of articles that focus on *parts* of the play; for example, the Megarian episode. The second format is articles that focus on a specific *theme*; for example, the theme of justice. Very rarely does one find a work that analyzes the *Acharnians* as a comprehensive whole. The only two authors, that I am aware of, who do this are Alan Sommerstein and Leo Strauss. Sommerstein's excellent commentary on the *Acharnians*, however, focuses exclusively on the historical aspect of the *Acharnians*. Strauss' equally excellent commentary focuses exclusively on the theoretical aspects of the *Acharnians*. Indeed, Sommerstein and Strauss represent two polar opposites to the study of the *Acharnians*; one temporal and space-bound, the other eternal and universal. What is needed is an examination of the *Acharnians* that takes both of these elements into consideration. This dissertation aims at doing exactly that.

Overall, the *Acharnians* is a play that seems to generate more divergence than convergence of opinion amongst scholars. It has been called both an anti-war and pro-war comedy. It has also been called a neutral comedy; neither in favour nor in opposition to the war. Some have called the *Acharnians* an inherently political work; others a light-hearted escapist fantasy. The play's protagonist, Dikaiopolis, has been called both a just and unjust man. The only common point of agreement amongst scholars is Dikaiopolis supposed hedonism and selfishness.³ That is, even those who argue that the *Acharnians* is

³ Those making this argument include in chronological order, Bowie, "The Parabasis in Aristophanes: Prolegomena, *Acharnians*," 40; Foley, "Tragedy and Politics in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," 38, 45-7; Olson, "Dikaiopolis' Motivations in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," 200; and Fisher, "Multiple Personalities and Dionysiac Festivals: Dikaiopolis in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," 40-4.

an anti-war play with a clear political agenda and Dikaiopolis a just man, do not fail to point out Dikaiopolis supposed selfish hedonism.

A number of claims will be made in the course of this dissertation. One claim is that Aristophanes had a triple agenda in the *Acharnians* consisting of (a) rehabilitating his reputation in the court of public opinion following Cleon's impeachment; (b) continuing the message of anti-imperialism first laid out in the *Babylonians*; and (c) the advocacy of negotiated peace talks between Athens and Sparta. Another claim is that the *Acharnians* is not a neutral or pro-war play but an anti-war play. More than that, I will claim that the *Acharnians* is imbued with a fundamental anti-war ethos. That ethos seems to be endemic to the genre of Old Comedy and it traces its origins to iambic poetry.

In terms of the play's protagonist, Dikaiopolis, contra to the prevailing sentiment in the literature, I would argue that he is not a selfish figure. On the contrary. I will claim that he is a pan-Hellenic figure who cares deeply for Athens. His actions, while seemingly selfish, upon closer examination are shown to stem from a concern for the well-being of the community. Dikaiopolis deliberations about the war are deeply rooted in the interests of the Athenian and Hellenic society as a whole. In his advocacy of peace, the playwright, Aristophanes uses numerous rhetorical techniques. These include, among others, appeals to xenophobic sentiments; the slandering of politicians; personal gossip; the politics of envy; the ridicule of military figures; and the dishonouring of military symbols.

Scholars who do consider the *Acharnians* to be an anti-war comedy, fail to provide a detailed, comprehensive analysis to sustain this thesis. I undertake this venture not only to reinforce the notion that the *Acharnians* is indeed an anti-war play, but also to investigate how, and in what manner, Aristophanes synthesized various literary and

theatrical traditions, namely Euripidean tragedy, sophistic oratory and iambic poetry in his advocacy of peace.

It should be pointed out that in the *Acharnians* one comes across various themes. One theme is an attack on erotic conventions as seen by Dikaiopolis' comment that the war begun over three whores. Another theme is that of old versus young men in Athens. This theme becomes evident in the songs of the Chorus and the Chorus Leader respectively when they complain that Athens treats her old veterans unfairly in the Law Courts by allowing younger men to act as their persecutors (676-718). Yet another theme is that of the braggart soldier, the precursor to the *Miles Gloriosus* character of Latin comedy: The above-mentioned themes are explored, to varying degrees, in the course of this dissertation.

1.1 Methodology

This thesis is an interplay between context and text. The context is the Peloponnesian War and the economic, historical and political aspects that lead to that war; the text is Aristophanes' *Acharnians*. Chapter one provides a general theoretical background. The question of what relevance and/or lessons an ancient anti-war play could hold that would still resonate in contemporary times is examined. Also examined is the suitability of comedy as an anti-war medium. This is followed by an inquiry into the supposed symbiotic relationship between Athenian democracy and Old Comedy. This is undertaken because Old Comedy, and Aristophanic comedy in particular, was noted for its element of frank speech that included satire and slandering. That culture of self-questioning, not only of political figures, but of institutions as well, presupposed the

existence of a healthy democracy. The fact that Old Comedy diminished at the same time as democracy, should warrant some reflection on our part. This is followed by a general overview of the Dionysian festivals, the ritual elements of Old Comedy and iambic poetry. This is deemed necessary because the *Acharnians*, despite some innovative features, is firmly rooted in these traditions. Thus, an understanding of the above-mentioned is vital to an interpretation of the *Acharnians*. The same chapter also examines (albeit briefly), the topics of comic laughter and humour. This is deemed desirable because one school of thought holds that comedy reflects the moral values of a community by mocking wrongdoing. In the arena of anti-war comedy this leads to an interesting question; if a community does not see war as a “wrong-doing”, how does the comic playwright approach the subject?

Chapter two provides a historical background to the Peloponnesian War. This background is needed because the *Acharnians* was firmly grounded in this conflict. When the *Acharnians* was written in 425 BC, this war had been raging for six years. War-related suffering and hardships were beginning to undermine popular support. During this time two distinct groups emerged; those favouring negotiated peace talks, and those opposing it; the peace party and the war party. The *Acharnians* depicts in dramatic format this internal dichotomy. The same chapter also provides a background to the *Babylonians*, another Aristophanic play. This background is not only desirable but necessary in appreciating the *Acharnians*. The *Babylonians* was performed in 426 BC, a year prior to the *Acharnians*. This critical comedy seems to have criticized Athenian treatment of allied city-states. The *Babylonians* depicted a cruel master by the name Dēmos mistreating some mill-slaves. The same comedy also mocked Cleon, a popular politician. Cleon went on to accuse Aristophanes of slandering the Athenian demos (among other

things), and sought to impeach him. While Aristophanes managed to avoid impeachment, in the *Acharnians* he identifies himself with the struggles of his protagonist, Dikaiopolis. This self-identification reaches its zenith during Dikaiopolis' defence speech. Here, we see Dikaiopolis/Aristophanes claim that rather than punishment he deserves rich rewards for his courage in speaking unpleasant truths.

Chapter three begins a detailed, line-by-line analysis of the play. The protagonist, Dikaiopolis, dominates the opening scene with his bemoanings regarding the loss of his self-sustaining lifestyle in the country as a result of the war. The argument is that Dikaiopolis' peace crusade and general antipathy of war stems from his inherently philosophical nature; that holds as one of its main tenets the principle of autarkia (self-sufficiency).

Chapter four consists of an in-depth analysis of Dikaiopolis' defence speech before a Chorus of angry Acharnian men who seek to kill him for his treacherous act of signing a private peace treaty with the Spartans. As I will demonstrate, Dikaiopolis provides a factual and critical rendering surrounding the origins of the Peloponnesian War (i.e., unbridled Athenian imperialism under the leadership of Pericles) but disguises it under a comical exegesis (i.e., the theft of whores). During his speech Dikaiopolis defends his act of negotiating a private peace treaty for himself and his family on the basis of Athens' unjust foreign policies that, according to him, provoked the war. The same section also articulates the genesis and nature of *trugōdia*, as Dikaiopolis characterizes this play. The audience is given to understand that *trugōdia* is a new genre that addresses serious political issues in a comic manner.

Chapter five looks at Dikaiopolis' private agora following the successful implementation of his private peace. Here, members of the theatre audience are shown the

enjoyments that come to Dikaiopolis as a result of his private peace. While there are certain elements of hyperbole in Dikaiopolis' fantastical world, such as plentiful food, wine and a carefree celebratory environment, Aristophanes' alternative image-nation appears necessary since it helps to re-expand the political imagination that had been limited by anger and hatred as a result of war. The same section also looks at the dramatic agon between Dikaiopolis and Lamachus (Great Battler), the war spirit incarnate. The argument here is that this agon typifies Old Comedy's inherent hostility towards the war ethos and *Miles Gloriosus* archetypes.

Chapter six provides a synopsis. It restates the importance of Aristophanes' claim that the *Acharnians* is neither a comedy nor tragedy but a *trugōdia* (τρυγῳδία). We are given to understand that *trugody* is the art of saying serious things in a funny manner. Those serious things are in the arena of politics and, in the particular case of the *Acharnians*, in the arena of war. Deliberations about war were usually left to epic poets, the likes of Homer, and later on to tragic playwrights, the likes of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. Having a comic playwright announce that even *trugody* knows what the *dikaia* (just) things are, and then proceed in demonstrating what that knowledge is, signals the birth of political comedy.

In terms of transliteration, Oswyn Murray advocates a Hellenic rather than a Latin transliteration by arguing that there is a shift underway amongst scholars in that direction.⁴ While it is true that a number of scholars transliterate Hellenic names

⁴ Murray, *Early Greece*, xiii.

according to their original spelling, replacing the Latin diphthongs *ae* with the Hellenic *ai* and the ending of names from the Latin *us* to the Hellenic *os*, many scholars do not. Furthermore, there are inconsistencies, with many scholars using interchangeably Hellenic and Latin transliterations, leading Paul Cartledge to comment that consistency in the transliteration of Greek words is impossible.⁵ While the same author does not specify the reasons why one can venture to guess that it has something to do with Dover's argument that Hellenic transliteration is likely to result in confusion amongst modern readers, something made clear by his comment that it goes too much "against the grain to write, let alone say" the Hellenic version of "Thoukydides."⁶ Indeed, Dover's argument is not without virtue, while his concoction of Hellenic and Latin renditions appear to be the most popular method among scholars and non-scholars alike. This, coupled with the fact that the spelling tool of the Microsoft Word program was rendering this dissertation as one giant misspelling when a Hellenic transliteration was used became the deciding factor in adapting Dover's method, namely, of using a mixture of Hellenic and Latin transliterations.

The term "comedy" (lower-case) is used to denote humorous or laughable performance in general, whereas "Comedy" (upper-case) is used to designate the genre of theatrical performance. Translations of Aristophanes' comedies are for the most part those of Jeffrey Henderson in the recently translated Loeb Classical Library series. In the specific case of the *Acharnians* in addition to Henderson's translation, Alan Sommerstein's translation is also used alongside with my own (occasional) translations.

⁵ Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia*, xv.

⁶ Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, xiv.

All quotations of fragments refer to Kassel, R., and C. Austin, (eds) *Poetae comici Graeci*, 1983. Unless otherwise specified, all dates are BC.

Throughout our commentary, Leo Strauss' commentary on Aristophanes' *Acharnians* will be a major point of reference. While it is true that Strauss undertook the study of the *Acharnians*, indeed the entire Aristophanic corpus, solely for the sake of sketching a multidimensional philosophical portrait of Socrates, this does not mean that we cannot, or should not, take advantage of Strauss' labours.

In terms of the title, *Aristophanes' Acharnians: Pursuing Peace with an Iambic Peitho*, while the first part is self-explanatory something should be said about the subtitle. A central argument of this dissertation is that Aristophanes' *Acharnians* is an inherently anti-war/pro-peace play which helps to explain the "Pursuing Peace." In terms of the word "Iambic," I am not referring so much to the metrical foot but rather to a style of poetry. The word "iambic" traces its origins to Iambe, the goddess of verse, who was famous for her scurrilous, ribald humour. Iambe was the daughter of Pan, while Pan was a follower of Dionysus, the patron god of Old Comedy. Apart from this link, Iambe was associated with Demeter since she was the one who managed to make the grieving earth goddess laugh. The link between Old Comedy and iambic poetry is particularly strong and in this respect the *Acharnians* is no exception. Aristophanes uses iambic poetry with its scurrilous, ribald and often hostile humour to ridicule and attack pro-war figures. These, often obscene, attacks no doubt made the theatre audience laugh much the same way that Iambe made Demeter laugh with her own obscenities.

This brings us to "Peitho", the goddess of persuasion and seduction. Peitho was a companion of Aphrodite, the goddess of Eros. One of the reasons for including the name of Peitho in the subtitle is in order to emphasize the political character of the *Acharnians*

and to draw attention to the anti-war / pro-peace *erotic* rhetoric found in this play. Similar to the rhetoricians of the Assembly and the Laws Courts which utilized rhetoric for persuasive purposes, Aristophanes utilizes rhetoric to persuade his rural theatre audiences to abandon the war party in favour of the peace party. The rhetorical language of persuasion reaches its zenith at lines 990-999. Here, the Acharnian Chorus draws a link between Aphrodite and the personified Reconciliation. The Acharnian Chorus Leader (who at this point has been persuaded by Dikaiopolis to reject Lamachus (The Great-Battler)) gazes at the female Reconciliation while utterly seduced by her charms. This seduction, is shown by Aristophanes to have been brought about by Dikaiopolis' persuasive efforts. Those persuasive efforts included iambic poetry and hence my rationale for the subtitle "Pursuing Peace with an Iambic Peitho."

1.2 Why *Acharnians* and Why Now?

Frank J. Dobie once wrote that the average PhD thesis is nothing more but the transference of old bones from one graveyard to another.⁷ Moreover, when the focus of the dissertation is on an ancient literary work there is also the question of relevance. Often the author feels obliged to address such questions as: “How is this ancient work relevant to our times?” and “What more could be said or written on this ancient work that has not already been said or written by previous scholars?” Taking a hint from other authors, one could argue that the study of ancient Greek texts is inherently desirable. Or, to put in the words of Paul Cartledge, one of the reasons “for studying and wanting to go on studying ancient Greeks” is because “they are so *like us*”⁸ and by inference they are also relevant to our times. Leo Strauss makes this very same argument when he writes,

It is not self-forgetting and pain loving antiquarianism nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism which induces us to turn with passionate interest, with unqualified willingness to learn, toward the political thought of classical antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West.⁹

For Cedric Whitman, the very suggestion that one needs to make any of the ancient authors “relevant” (a word which he thoroughly detested) is a failure of understanding that the ancients become “relevant at once by virtue of the meaning” one elicits from their

⁷ Dobie, *A Texan in England*, 1945.

⁸ Cartledge, “The Politics of Tragedy Ancient & Modern,” 2000.

⁹ Strauss, *The City and Man*, 1.

texts.¹⁰ In Whitman's interpretation the readers of Aristophanes make Aristophanes relevant by virtue of the meaning they derive from his works.

Aristophanes knew something of this. If one reads his comedies one recognizes many paraphrases and allusions to the works of older authors including Homer (circa 8th BC), the iambic poet Archilochus (circa 680-645 BC), and Aeschylus (525-456 BC). These older authors become relevant for Aristophanes by virtue of the meaning he elicits from their texts in response to the prevalent political context of his time, the Peloponnesian War.

One is tempted to write that the most significant war of our time is the so-called "war on terror" because it involves our country, Canada. Canadian involvement in this war arose as a result of our military alliance with the United States. Notwithstanding the fact that the "war on terror" involves our country, is it not every ongoing war on earth worthy of study? For example, is it not the war in Iraq as relevant as the war in Afghanistan? And is not the Iraq War not as relevant as the war in Darfur? And is it not the Darfur War as relevant as the war in Somalia? And so on. War has been plaguing humankind for millennia and if present-day conflicts are any indication war will continue plaguing humanity. Advances in science and technology rather than abolishing warfare have actually made it far more effective and deadly. Nuclear and biological weapons now have the ability to destroy all humankind.

In all of this, dreams of imposed peace by empires (i.e., *Pax Romana*) are unrealistic. Apart from questions of desirability, no empire lasts for forever. Hence the

¹⁰ Quoting Charles Segal in his introduction to Cedric Whitman's book, *The Heroic Paradox: Essays on Homer, Sophocles and Aristophanes*, 18.

permanent relevance of anti-war comedy, which is powered by the capacity of comedy to remind us of our animality. Or as Kenneth Burke puts it:

Aristotle mentions the definition of man as the “laughing animal”, but he does not consider it adequate. Though I would hasten to agree, I obviously have a big investment in it, owing to my conviction that mankind’s only hope is a cult of comedy. (The cult of tragedy is too eager to help out with the holocaust. And in the last analysis, it is too pretentious to allow for the proper recognition of our animality).¹¹

I agree with Burke’s insight that because comedy allows for the proper recognition of our animality it represents mankind’s only “hope.” Political philosopher Charles Blattberg, who likewise favours the introduction of comedy into the realm of politics, echoes a similar sentiment. To him comedy is capable of its “own epiphanies,” of its own “connection to the transcendent,” and making room for laughter in the political realm, insofar as it can facilitate not just negotiation but also *conversation*, is highly desirable (more on this below).¹²

While tragic poets have written powerful anti-war tragedies, the most notable being Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, written in the aftermath of the Melian massacre of 415, I would nevertheless claim that no other genre is capable of exposing the absurdity of war as lucidly as comedy.¹³ Indeed, a recurring theme throughout this dissertation will be the claim that Aristophanes, within the genre of Old Comedy, followed an anti-war comic

¹¹ Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 20, n.2.

¹² Blattberg, *From Pluralist to Patriotic Politics*, 117-8.

¹³ Paraphrasing Ehrenberg’s suggestion that Aristophanes’ comedies offer greater insights to Athenian society in comparison to other modes; “the reality of the people is not displaced by the myth, sacred or rationalized, as in tragedy, nor largely lost in the aloofness of the political historian as with Thucydides or in the abstractions of philosophy” (*The People of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy*, 10).

tradition rooted deeply in the fertility rituals of Demeter and Dionysus. Our earliest example of this tradition is Archilochus (ca. 650) an iambic poet from the Aegean island of Paros who ridiculed the dominant heroic war-ethos of his era despite the fact that he was also a soldier. In one of his surviving fragments he describes in the first-person how during a battle he threw away his shield in order to save his life,

Some barbarian is waving my shield, since I was obliged to
leave that perfectly good piece of equipment behind
under a bush. But I got away, so what does it matter?
Let the shield go; I can buy another one equally good (Fr.5).

Not only does one not detect a sense of shame here but, on the contrary, the underlying tone appears self-congratulatory.¹⁴ Archilochus' licentious and non-heroic poetry earned him the distinction of being banished from Sparta (the hyperwarrior city of ancient Greece) on fears that his poetry would have led to the corruption of Spartan youth.

On another note, the same anti-war ethos that permeates Aristophanes' peace plays has endeared the same playwright to many contemporary anti-war activists. At the onset of the Iraq War in 2003, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* attracted the attention of two New York actresses and anti-war activists, Kathryn Blume and Sharron Bower. They

¹⁴ Miller, *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness*, 18-20, in a chapter entitled "Epos and Iambos or Archilochus Meets the Wolfman" argues against the conventional interpretation of Archilochus' shield-throwing poem as a unique development in iambic poetry, but fails to provide persuasive evidence in support of this argument.

organized a reading of the play and not before long over 1,029 readings of the play with the estimated involvement of 225,000 people in 59 countries, had taken place.¹⁵

That being said, there is more to Aristophanes' peace plays than a simple anti-war ethos. One also detects an element of critical examination in relation to the Athenian state. To be sure, Aristophanes had plenty of comic material if he wished to parody either Persia or Sparta. His focus, however, rested exclusively on Athens (or to put it in other words, he had a tendency to stare at the log in the eye of his own state¹⁶). In this sense Aristophanes was like a "Socratic" gad-fly: a comic poet who delivered his sting twice a year within the context of the Dionysian festivals. One of the first of those stings was the *Babylonians* (426), a comedy which implied that Athens had grown into a tyrannical imperial power that mistreated her allies. Rather than relenting in the face of political persecution by Cleon on charges of political slandering, Aristophanes embarked on a refutation of those charges in the *Acharnians*. Here, Aristophanes finds it fitting to argue that, rather than persecution, he deserves rewards from the polis (633) because it has received many benefits from him.¹⁷ If this was not enough, Aristophanes delivers a

¹⁵ Asked by a journalist to help explain its phenomenal success to what is now referred to as the "Lysistrata Project" Bower, good-humouredly replied, "Nobody can resist an ancient Greek dick joke." Not to be outdone, the interviewing journalist remarked that the "fun, vitality, humour and sex" of the play left her more than happy to abandon "the other side" namely, conservative right-wing Americans, stuck with their "Confederate flags, [and] Bible study" (Pollitt, "Phallic Balloons Against the War," 9). For a full description of this project that has now expanded its focus beyond the Iraq War to include all violent conflicts from a feminist/ecological/socialist perspective, see <http://www.lysistrataproject.org/index.htm>

¹⁶ Paraphrasing Luke 6:41, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

¹⁷ Notice Socrates' homologous argument in Plato's *Apology*.

second political sting by arguing that Athens was partly to blame for the Peloponnesian War. Ultimately, it is a combination of the above-mentioned variables - a fundamental anti-war ethos, an ability to expose the absurdity of war, and a consistent tendency to engage in self-critical analysis - that calls for an in-depth analysis of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*.

1.3 The Emergence of Democracy and Old Comedy in Athens

Theatre first made its appearance in Attica within the context of the Dionysian religious festivals, circa 546-534.¹⁸ It was sponsored, alongside a multiplicity of other projects, by the “tyrant” Peisistratus.¹⁹ His underlying objective was to gain and maintain popular support amongst the general populace, something that was crucial to his endeavour of fending-off rival Athenian aristocrats for political supremacy.²⁰ Keeping the above in mind, a rather interesting (but also marginalized) argument exists in the literature which links Dionysian drama to Attic peasantry. Richard Sewell repeats and elaborates an argument first proposed (to the best of my knowledge) by historian Barr Stringfellow that Peisistratus founded the Great Dionysia in order to appeal to the Attic peasantry.²¹ Dionysus, Barr argues, was the peasants’ favourite god and in favouring Dionysus, the argument continues, Peisistratus was in reality favouring the god of the poor populace. Moreover, insofar as Dionysus represented a “union of man with god, of death and resurrection”, Peisistratus “was drawing on the deepest beliefs of the poor, on ancient religious hopes and fears” that the Attic aristocrats who favoured the Olympic

¹⁸ Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 181.

¹⁹ According to Sealey, *A History of the Greek City States ca.700-338 B.C.*, 38-9, the word tyrant is not a Greek but a Lydian word meaning “King.” During this time-period the word “tyrant” was associated with oriental wealth and/or a one-man rule and did not yet carry any negative connotations.

²⁰ Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 354.

²¹ I.e., Barr, Stringfellow, *The Will of Zeus: A History of Greece from the Origins of Hellenic Culture to the Death of Alexander* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1961).

deities did not share.²² The mysteries promised eternal life to all, even slaves, concludes Marrs, and hence the appeal of Dionysus to the poor majority.

Sewell extrapolates further on this thesis by emphasizing the relationship between Dionysus and poor people (not necessarily peasants). In his view of Dionysus as the partisan god of the poor people in their struggle to share in political power, Sewell writes: “Moses versus Pharaoh and the Egyptian nobility, Jesus versus the Romans and upper class Jerusalemites, Mohammed versus Medina’s rich merchants...we hardly think of Bacchus Dionysus versus the Greek aristocracy, but the conflict left traces...”²³ The same sentiment is echoed by Charles Rann Kennedy in regards to the evolution of Old Comedy. He writes that the farces of Susarion were simply “too coarse and licentious to be encouraged in the city of Athens, while governed by its ancient aristocracy: and much less would they have suited the grave policy of Solon and Pisistratus. Comedy therefore was for a great many years left to exhibit itself in its rude form to the Attic peasants.”²⁴ Likewise, Murray et al., argue that Dionysus, similar to the goddess Demeter, “was an agrarian deity whose cult was more popular among the Greek common people than among the aristocrats.”²⁵

²² This author appears to be assuming that Dionysus was a late addition to the Olympian pantheon.

²³ Sewell, *In the Theatre of Dionysos: Democracy and Tragedy in Ancient Athens*, 26-7.

²⁴ Kennedy, *The Orations of Demosthenes*, 316.

²⁵ David Sacks, Oswyn Murray and Margaret Bunson, *A Dictionary of the Ancient Greek World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 84.

Ober argues that an indirect consequence of drama was the development of a “civilian self-consciousness of the Athenian demos.”²⁶ This newfound demotic self-consciousness, the argument continues, helped usher into the political arena subsequent political figures, the likes of Cleisthenes the Democrat, who abolished one-man rule and made further concessions to the Athenian demos by granting them ever-greater degrees of political power. Subsequent political leaders advocated similar demotic-friendly policies in their own struggles for political supremacy, leading to the development of radical democracy in the 4th century. During that development, the City Dionysia evolved into an economic activity.²⁷ According to Henderson, at its heyday thousands of actors and dancers participated, large amounts of money were utilized for their functioning and a multiplicity of civic and political events were performed under its auspices such as parades, sacrifices, processions and ceremonies. Within that context the City Dionysia came to act as a display for democratic power and authority.

In terms of drama, Henderson argues that it developed in tune with democratic institutions and came to reflect democratic ideology and culture, and hence played an important role in constructing it.²⁸ Thus, Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* is said to have helped develop the novel concept of collective decision making. Likewise, Attic drama is said to reflect the tensions between the old political order of aristocracy and the emerging democracy. The tension that one witnesses in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* between the Old Order (Furies) and the New Order (Olympian gods) is said to reflect the removal of political authority from the aristocratic Areopagus and the transfer of that power to the

²⁶ Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 66-7.

²⁷ Henderson, “The Dēmos and the Comic Competition,” 79.

²⁸ Introductory comments to the translations of the *Acharnians/Knights* (p.11).

democratic Assembly. The fact that drama, and in particular Old Comedy, flourished during the high noon of democracy lends further credence to this theory. The above might lead to the famous chicken-egg question: which came first? That is to say, which came first democracy or drama? Undoubtedly, democracy came first, although drama reflected, and at times, enhanced its development.

The above-mentioned view, while the most popular, it is not the only one in the literature. Peter Rhodes argues that although we cannot ignore the fact that Athenian drama was “produced for and conditioned by the democratic polis” we should not associate the festivals, and the plays performed at those festivals, too intimately with the democracy of Classical Athens because we risk misunderstanding the plays, the festival and democracy by seeing them in “too narrow a context.”²⁹ The same scholar provides an exclusionary clause in the case of Aristophanic comedy; for he argues that the “kind of public criticism of institutions and public figures” found in Old Comedy “was more easily tolerated by a democratic state than by states of other kinds”³⁰ (a detailed description of Old Comedy follows below). It is said that one of the main reasons that Old Comedy

²⁹ Rhodes, “Nothing to Do with Democracy,” 105. This author argues that some of the institutional settings, such as the *choregoi* (wealthy patrons) and reserved seating for distinguished members of the audience were also found in other non-democratic city-states, leading him to conclude: “I believe that the democratic details are comparatively unimportant, that it is much more important that the institutional setting is a *polis* setting than it is a democratic setting; that what we have here is the *polis* in action, rather than especially democracy in action” (113).

³⁰ Ibid, 105, n. 10. That being said, Rusten, “Who “Invented” Comedy?” 37, argues that although Old Comedy made its appearance in 487/6, *political* Old Comedy did not appear until 446 almost 40-years later.

flourished in a democratic environment was due to the principle/privilege of *parrhesia* (frank speech); the proud hallmark of Athenian democracy.³¹

In a work entitled *The Constitution of the Athenians* the claim is made that while the Athenian demos allowed, and in many cases encouraged, Old Comedy playwrights to criticize public institutions and public figures, it prohibited them from criticizing the demos. The author of this work remains anonymous to this day, however, scholars refer to him as “Pseudo-Xenophon” or “Old Oligarch.” The Old Oligarch, characterizes Old Comedy as a democratic tool. He writes:

[The Athenians] do not allow anyone to put the *dēmos* in a comedy or to speak ill of it; but in the case of private individuals they encourage it, knowing quite well that the *kōmoidoumenos* is not usually from the *dēmos* or the masses, but a wealthy or noble or powerful man; and few of the poor or the democratic-minded are mocked in comedy, and these only for being busybodies or more greedy than the *dēmos*, so that they are not bothered by their being mocked in a comedy.³²

While a healthy dose of skepticism is always useful in textual interpretations - especially considering this author’s well-know oligarchic sympathies - historical evidence lends support to this thesis. Think, for example, of the political persecution launched against Aristophanes by Cleon on charges that the former made comedy out of the Athenian polis and outraged/slandered the *dēmos* in the *Babylonians* (more on this later).

³¹ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 17. In terms of contemporary politics the term “politics of sincerity” is used to refer to the use of *parrhesia* or “straight talk” in the political arena.

³² Old Oligarch, *Constitution of the Athenians* (2.18), as quoted in Rusten “Who “Invented” Comedy? The Ancient Candidates for the Origins of Comedy and the Visual Evidence,” 57.

The eventual disappearance of Old Comedy has been linked to the decline of democracy in Athens. The dominant theory in the literature is that the loss of political freedom and freedom of speech led to the cessation of personal attacks on political figures.³³ More recently attempts have been made to downplay the democracy/Old Comedy theory in favour of an audience-preference theory. Segal suggests that all the changes that occurred in subsequent comedy cannot be explained on the basis of the war or its subsequent painful economic and political aftermaths.³⁴ As he puts it, the Athenians might have “lost their freedom, but not their marbles.”³⁵ For this scholar, the evolution from Old to New Comedy was “less the result of external agents than the ever-evolving awareness of what the average spectator wanted to see,” and what the spectators wanted most was a break away from politics and the public domain in favour of the non-political and the “privates lives of the mundane.”³⁶ Segal’s interpretation reminds one of Epicurus’ (341-270 BC) reclusive philosophy, a philosophy that bordered on what we would today term “secular individualism” and one which advocated a withdrawal from the political sphere. While the first example of a New Comedy play was Aristophanes’ *Wealth* in 388, which in turn meant that it predated the Epicurean movement by decades, nonetheless, it could be argued that the propensity of the Athenian society to withdraw into the private sphere begun to occur shortly after the violent regime of the Thirty Tyrants in 404-403 BC and found its fullest expression in the Epicurean movement.

³³ See Henderson, “Attic Old Comedy, Frank Speech, and Democracy,” 11.

³⁴ Segal, *The Death of Comedy*, 110.

³⁵ The Athenians would have to wait for the year 1801 and the British Lord Thomas Elgin before losing their “marbles.”

³⁶ *Ibid*, 111.

1.3.1 Dionysian Festivals & Drama

Dramas were performed during the religious Dionysian festivals of the Lenaea or Rural Dionysia and the City Dionysia.³⁷ The Lenaea took place in the month of Poseidon, corresponding roughly to December-January, while the City Dionysia took place in the month of Elaphebolion (March-April). Plays performed during The City Dionysia were held at the Theatre of Dionysus on the foothill of Acropolis, the heart of Athens.

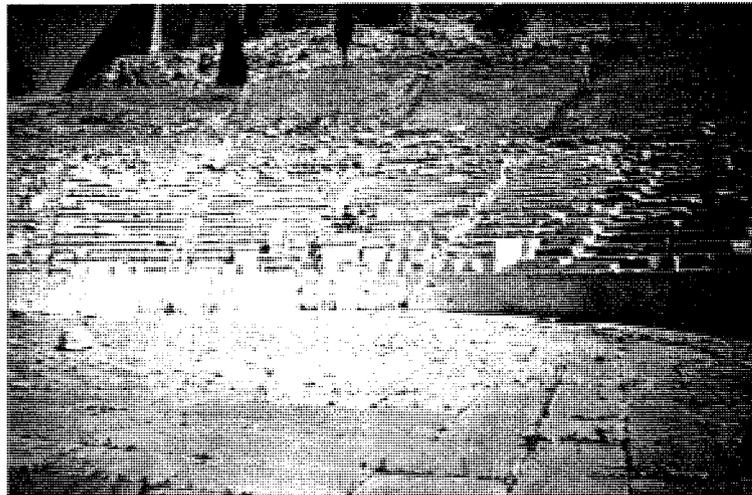


Figure 1. Theatre of Dionysus (Source: Picture taken by author on June 2004)

The Rural Dionysia were held in the Attic countryside although we do not know the exact location.³⁸ While we do not know the seating capacity of the rural theatre, the Theatre of

³⁷ Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 181-2. In regards to the dates and names of the festivals there is a certain perplexity associated with them (see Capps, “The “More Ancient Dionysia” at Athens-Thucydides II.15”, 25-42).

³⁸ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 28.

Dionysus, located at the foothill of Acropolis, was capable of holding between 10,000 to 17,000 people.³⁹ Even if we take the lower estimate this means that the Theatre of Dionysus surpassed the Athenian Assembly (5,000 to 6,000) in terms of audience capacity. As regards audience composition there can be little doubt that, unlike the exclusive Assembly where only male, adult Athenian citizens were admitted, the theatre was an all-inclusive institution allowing attendance to women, children, metics and even slaves.

As one might expect, the different time and location of the two festivals meant a different theatre audience. The Rural Dionysia was a strictly Athenian affair while the City Dionysia was more cosmopolitan, with allies, traders, visitors and ambassadors in attendance. Aristophanes seems to have tailored his comedies to the corresponding audience. For example, if one compares the *Acharnians*, which was performed at the Lenaea, and *Peace* which was performed at the City Dionysia, one discerns considerable differences in the theme of these two anti-war comedies. In the *Acharnians*, Dikaiopolis accuses his fellow-citizens of political culpability and naivety (133), blames Pericles for the Megarian decree (530), blames the Athenians for failing to retract the same decree (538); ridicules an Athenian general (580-590) and satirizes the widespread phenomenon of Athenian sycophancy (905-930). On the other hand, the protagonist in *Peace*, Trygaios (Vine-Harvester), while also war-weary and in search of peace, refrains from intense criticism of Athens and blames the onset of war not only on Athens but on other city-states as well (492). The rest of Aristophanes' comedies reveal a similar pattern.

³⁹ An exact figure is a matter of dispute. Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 9, and Olddaker, *Scenes from the Birds of Aristophanes*, xii, estimates a seating capacity of 17,000 while Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 15, suggests 10,000.

Comedies offering biting critique and parody of Athenian persons, institutions and policies are confined to the Rural Dionysia, while the more abstract comedies are found at the City Dionysia.

According to one account, the birth of tragedy occurred around 535 BC when the actor Thespis stepped away from the Chorus and announced: "I am Dionysus." Plutarch informs us that the theatre audience found this utterance perplexing because they saw no connection between Dionysus and the tragedies of Aeschylus or Phrynichus who staged revised legendary tales.⁴⁰ This led to the famous ancient saying, "What has it to do with Dionysus?" meaning, that tragedy had nothing to do with Dionysus. If the audience had a hard time conceptualizing a link between tragedy and Dionysus, this was not the case for Old Comedy since this genre was imbued with abusive, obscene, agonistic elements that were common to Dionysian cult worship. Indeed, Rusten suggests that Old Comedy traces its roots to phallic processions (i.e., Dionysian worship) alongside with Doric comedy and the poet Susarion of Megara.⁴¹ In specific regards to Susarion, Erich Segal argues that the first comic performance *per se* occurred when Susarion, following a real-life "heated" argument with his wife, stormed into the theatre and cried:

O fellow citizens, all women are the bane of life.
But how could we have a home without a baneful wife?⁴²

⁴⁰ Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 181.

⁴¹ Rusten, "Who "Invented" Comedy? The Ancient Candidates for the Origins of Comedy and the Visual Evidence," 37.

⁴² Susarion frag. I. K-A, as quoted in Segal, *The Death of Comedy*, 29, n. 12.

1.3.2 The Ritual Elements of Old Comedy

On the theoretical plane, both tragedy and comedy are said to present an “affirmative response to negative limits” namely, both address the same “terrible reality” of existence but in a differing manner. Whereas tragedy invokes fear and pity comedy invokes laughter in the avoidance of hubris and the pursuit of *sophrosyne*,⁴³ while both forms fulfill the function of religion insofar as they help people cope with life’s inherent suffering while practicing the virtues.⁴⁴

In terms of conceptual origins, some authors see in Old Comedy the genetic imprint of fertility festivals,⁴⁵ which include the following:

Kōmos: A ritualistic procession of drunken men, the komasts. They engaged in a variety of activities and moods ranging from playfulness, licentious behaviour and verbally abusive speech. The roots of *kōmos* are found in Dionysian rituals and mythic figures such as the Maenads, Satyrs and Pan. The latter two were half-human/half-animal creatures, and the Maenads (Raving-Ones) were frenzied, orgiastic women. The Maenads, Satyrs and Pan are thought to be symbolic of human animalistic instincts, namely, aggressive and sexual tendencies. Such tendencies were viewed as destabilizing threats to the well-functioning of human society. Thus, Dionysus’ entourage of licentious, wine-drinking, playful, lazy (or what was perceived as laziness) orgiastic, (possibly violent)

⁴³ A problematic value term that is hard to translate. Associate terms found in the literature include: self-knowledge, temperance and self-restrain.

⁴⁴ Hatab, *Nietzsche's Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence*, 162.

⁴⁵ For example, Conford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, 1993, and Bowie, Aristophanes, *Myth, Ritual and Comedy*, 1994. An alternative conceptual interpretation is that of Sifakis, “The Structure of Aristophanic Comedy,” 1992, that focuses on folk tales.

anthropozoomorphic creatures were perceived as a disrupting force in human society.⁴⁶ In terms of intoxication, according to Glasgow if rational faculty is taken to mean the carefully cultured socialization with all its rules and restraints, the ensuing assumption is that an intoxicated person temporarily loses some of those restraints and reverts temporarily backwards to a more “natural” or pre-civilized state of being.⁴⁷ Viewed from the above perspectives, the *kōmos* processions seem to have been the temporary expression of otherwise voluntarily suppressed aggressive and sexual tendencies in Greek society. In the *Acharnians*, Dikaiopolis’ procession (1200-1235) is said to be a humorous takeoff of such *kōmic* procession,⁴⁸ and on a broader scale the element of audience abuse that one encounters on a regular basis in Aristophanic comedy is said to have its roots in this communal ritual.

Agon: According to some classical scholars the concept of *agon* in Old Comedy is traceable to the concept of Old versus New King. In Aristophanes this particular element manifests itself (among other things), in what Simon Goldhill calls *epideixis*. According to him *epideixis* in the framework of 5th and 4th century Athens came to symbolize the “intellectual enlightenment” of the polis. According to this argument intellectuals drew on the agonistic nature of public life and developed a rhetorical display that was linked to the “ideas of argumentative proof and demonstration—showing as well as showing off.”⁴⁹

Iambic poetry: A type of obscene poetry that had its origin in the fertility rites of Demeter. Iambic poetry was said to have originated with Iambe, the daughter of Pan and

⁴⁶ Hatab, *Nietzsche’s Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence*, 155-66.

⁴⁷ Glasgow, *Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy*, 152.

⁴⁸ Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, 16.

⁴⁹ Simon Goldhill, *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, 3.

Echo. According to legend Iambe managed to make Demeter laugh by exposing and manipulating her genitals.⁵⁰ This type of obscene poetry, while laced with scurrilous and ribald humour, was not hostile. Hostile iambic poetry seems to have originated with the 6th century poet Archilochus. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Archilochus took advantage of the occasion of a festival in honour of Demeter and composed obscene, hostile poetry against a personal adversary which some contemporary commentators have labelled “blame poetry.”⁵¹ In Aristophanes we find both types of iambic poetry, the obscene as well as the blaming, or what I would term “Archilochean type.” Aristophanes uses the Archilochean type of poetry to attack and expose. An excellent example of this type of verse is found in the *Knights*. Here, the pro-war leader Cleon is portrayed as Paphlagon, while Aristophanes lurks behind the mask of the Sausage-Seller. The obscene, violent threats exchanged by the two figures are the most violent (although not the most obscene) to be found in Aristophanic comedy.

Sausage-Seller: ...I'll stuff your arsehole like a sausage skin.

Paphlagon: And I'll drag you outside by the butt, upside down.

Demosthenes: Be Poseidon, only after you have thrown me there first.

Sausage-Seller: I denounce you for cowardice.

Paphlagon: I will tan your hide.

Sausage-Seller: I will flay you and make a thief's pouch with the skin.

Paphlagon: I will peg you on the ground.

Sausage-Seller: I will slice you into mince-meat.

Paphlagon: I will tear out your eyelashes.

Sausage Seller: I will slit your gullet. (360-364)

⁵⁰ On this myth see Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, 15 and

Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy*, 195.

⁵¹ Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, 1979.

While the above passage could be interpreted from the framework of theatrical immunity that the comic poets enjoyed within the context of the Dionysian festival⁵² the high level of hostility could also be explained as intrinsic to the framework of iambic poetry. For Rosen, the utilization of certain words, such as *pharmakos* (poisonous) in the iambographic tradition was used by the comic poets to signal to the audience that a person's offence has taken on public dimensions and that the targeted individual had become a public menace.⁵³ The fact that the word *pharmakos* is found in Aristophanic comedy only in relation to Cleon leads the same author to argue that for Aristophanes, Cleon had indeed become a public menace.

The same passage can also serve as an illustration of the element of *agon*. Insofar as the above passage is a verbal agon between the Sausage-Seller (read Aristophanes) and Paphlagon (read Cleon) for the favours of Demos (i.e., the personification of the Athenian demos) as to which of the two is the biggest thief, liar and aggressive demagogue, Aristophanes must not only expose Cleon, he must defeat him by *surpassing* him in his "*techne*".⁵⁴ Aristophanes must be able to claim: "Look, I too can do what my great rival can do; indeed, I can do it better than he. No Cleon ever spoke such a vulgar, hostile

⁵² Mastromarco, "Onomasti komodein e spoudaiogeloion," 2002.

⁵³ Rosen, *Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition*, 1988.

⁵⁴ Ancient authors describe Cleon as an aggressive speaker who used to shout and shake his clothes in the Assembly (in sharp contrast to previous speakers who were more refrained). For example, Thucydides writes that he was *vaiotatos tōn politōn* (the most violent of the citizens) (3.36) and Plutarch likewise writes that he was the first rhetorician to shout and hurl abuse (*Pericles* 5).

speech. Only the contest made me a vulgar demagogue.”⁵⁵ Incidentally, the successful incorporation of iambic elements in the comedies took place according to Henderson because while the Athenians valued a “polished and urbane orator and debater” and listened with great sophistication to politicians and tragedians, it was from the comic playwrights that they expected the greatest “verbal pyrotechnics”.⁵⁶

Gamos: a fertility-related coupling of men and women in springtime. It should be noted that Aristophanes’ anti-war comedies, the *Acharnians*, *Lysistrata* and *Peace* celebrate the defeat of war and attainment of peace with music, food, wine and *gamos*.

In terms of the historical Aristophanes we know very little. His father’s name was Philipus and he belonged to the urban deme Cydathenaeum where he was a member of the tribe Pandionis. He came from a prosperous family, was married and had four sons, Nikostratos, Philetaeros, Araros and Philippus. Araros followed in his father’s footsteps

⁵⁵ Paraphrasing Nietzsche in *Homer’s Contest* “... special artistic importance in his [Plato] dialogues, is usually the result of an emulation with the art of the orators, of the sophists, of the dramatists of his time, invented deliberately in order that at the end he could say: “Behold, I can also do what my great rivals can; yea I can do it even better than they. No Protagoras has composed such beautiful myths as I, no dramatist such a spirited and fascinating whole as the *Symposion*, no orator penned such an oration as I put up in the *Gorgias*—and now I reject all that together and condemn all imitative art! Only the contest made me a poet, a sophist, an orator!”

⁵⁶ Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, x.

and produced his father's two last comedies *Cocalus* and *Aeolosicon*.⁵⁷ A total of forty-four comedies were attributed to Aristophanes. Only eleven survived extant. Below is a table depicting the surviving comedies of Aristophanes.

Year	Title	Producer	Prize	Festival
425	<i>Acharnians</i>	Kallistratos	1 st	Rural Dionysia
424	<i>Knights</i>	Aristophanes	1 st	Rural Dionysia
424	<i>Wasps</i>	Aristophanes	2 nd	Rural Dionysia
421	<i>Peace</i>	Aristophanes	2 nd	City Dionysia
c. 418	<i>Clouds</i>	Revised version of <i>Clouds</i> I (3 rd or lesser prize)	N/A	N/A
414	<i>Birds</i>	Kallistratos	2 nd	Dionysia
411	<i>Lysistrata</i>	Kallistratos	?	Rural Dionysia
411	<i>Women at the Thesmophoria</i>	Kallistratos		City Dionysia
405	<i>Frogs</i>	Philonides	1 st	Rural Dionysia
c. 392	<i>Assemblywomen</i>	unknown		unknown
388	<i>Wealth II</i>	unknown	1 st (?)	unknown

Table 1. Timetable of Aristophanes' comedies by year, title, producer, prize and corresponding festival.⁵⁸

In terms of pinpointing the nature of Aristophanic comedy, this is a challenge in itself.

One of the most helpful descriptions, however, is given by Ian Storey who writes:

I would ask you to imagine (if you can) in dramatic form a combination of: the slapstick of the Three Stooges, the song & dance of a Broadway musical, the verbal wit of a television show like *Cheers* or *Frasier*, the exuberance of Mardi Gras, the parody of a Mel Brooks movie, the outrageous sexuality of the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, the political satire of *Doonesbury* or your favourite editorial cartoonist, the

⁵⁷ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 2-6.

⁵⁸ Source: Henderson, *Acharnians*, 4-6, with minor modifications.

fantastic imagination of J. R. R. Tolkien, all wrapped up in the format of a Monty Python movie. Such a creature might be closer to a comedy of the Aristophanic sort.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Storey, "Poets, Politicians and Perverts: Personal humour in Aristophanes," 85.

1.3.3 Old Comedy and the Peloponnesian War

Just as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were perceived by the ancients as the best tragedians and were subsequently referred to as the “tragic triad,” the same was true of comedy. Cratinus, an older contemporary of Aristophanes who is widely acknowledged as the father of political comedy, alongside Aristophanes and Eupolis, were likewise considered the best of comic poets and hence the phrase, the “comic triad”. What is significant about this triad (but also of many other Old Comedy poets as well) is that they used to write comedies that were critical of the Peloponnesian War and pro-war politicians the likes of Pericles, Cleon, Alcibiades and Hyperbolus (to mention a few). The above-mentioned politicians also happened to belong to the “Democratic Party.”⁶⁰ The close synchrony between pro-war politicians that advocated a continuation and/or escalation of the war with Sparta and the Democratic Party had deep historical roots in Athens. To be exact, much of the anti-Spartan sentiment in the demotic population was traceable to a violent conflict in 508 BC involving two Athenian aristocrats, the demotic-backed Cleisthenes and the Spartan-backed Isagoras, who were competing for political control following the ouster of the tyrant Hippias in 511 BC.

⁶⁰ Eupolis, is said to have been drowned by Alcibiades after a particularly ruthless attack in one of his comedies. It is highly doubtful that this ancient gossip is true; nonetheless, this tale serves as evidence that the comic poets were merciless in their attacks.

Given that Aristophanes attacked democratic politicians, this has given rise to the argument that Aristophanes was anti-democratic and conservative.⁶¹ Curiously, one does not encounter the same argument in regards to other Old Comedy poets. One ventures to guess (cautiously) that the reason is that since Aristophanes is the only author from whom we possess 11 extant comedies (in comparison to mere fragments from other poets) contemporary scholars are at a greater ease attributing to him a particular political ideology. However, we cannot ignore the fact that other Old Comedy poets attacked democratic figures with the same fervour as Aristophanes. Hence, unless one is willing to argue that the entire genre of Old Comedy was anti-democratic and pro-oligarchic, the same argument cannot be maintained in regards to Aristophanes.

In seeking to explain the general hostility that one witnesses in Old Comedy towards pro-war politicians, rather than turning to partisan politics for an exegesis, which I believe is vastly misleading, we need to turn to the ritual origins of Old Comedy. Insofar as the origins of Old Comedy are traceable to ancient fertility rituals involving Demeter and Dionysus, we can expect the genre to be imbued with a strong anti-war ethos. Beginning with the poetry of Archilochus (circa 680-645 BC), one of the earliest iambic composers, one detects in his writings a strong anti-war philosophy that manifests itself in the rejection of the heroic/warrior ethical code (i.e., refusing to throw one's shield even if it means survival).

In terms of Aristophanic comedy, there is also the non-violent figure of Dionysus the *Meilichos* (sweet like honey), the Wine-God whom the comic poets repeatedly invoke

⁶¹ The most well-known advocate of this argument is Henderson (*Acharnians/Knights*, 14) although various forms of this argument is encountered in other scholars as well.

as their patron-god. The same anti-war ethos permeates much of the *Acharnians*. Here, Aristophanes draws strong links between Dionysus the *Meilichos* and peace. Allusions are made that point to an inherent incompatibility between the Wine-God and the War-God (*Polemos*) (978-87).

More than that, in a number of comedies such as, the *Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Lysistrata* and the *Frogs*, Aristophanes ascertains that the Dionysian spirit is compatible with democracy, whereas the spirit of war is not. Dionysus is consistently portrayed by Aristophanes as a literary figure, a lover of the arts, a god who loves dialogues and deliberations; a true philo-logos. The rejection of Polemos (War-God) in the *Acharnians* as a violent god who is a menace to civic harmony and democratic friendship is especially telling. At lines 978-87 we hear the Chorus Leader singing that he would never welcome the War-God in his house, nor invite him to sing the Harmodius Song, because he is incapable of enjoying the wine of peace and friendship.

The song of Harmodius, it should be pointed out, was the unofficial anthem of Athenian democracy. It praised Harmodius, and his lover Aristogeiton, for destroying the tyranny of the Peisistratid dynasty and paving the way for democracy. Judging from the above, I would argue, Aristophanes was seeking to establish a connection between Dionysus, democracy, and peace. Put differently, Aristophanes crowns Dionysus as the god of democracy. More than that, Aristophanes forges a bond between democracy and peace. Hostility towards other city-states is condemned in the *Acharnians*, while friendly relations with neighbouring states are praised and encouraged.

The relationship between democracy, peace and war is not an insignificant subject in the field of Political Theory and International Relations. The association between democracy and war has been the focus of recent research and interest on the topic remains

strong. According to one view, democracies abhor conflict and only engage in war with great reluctance and only for the purpose of self-defence.⁶² A similar view holds that democracies simply do not fight other democracies.⁶³ This pacifist view of democracy, better known as the “democratic peace theory”, has found an eager audience in American and Canadian foreign policy alike. For example, both countries advocate the spread of democracy as the means by which to achieve peace and security in the Middle East, Afghanistan and, indeed, the entire world.

I do not doubt that, in comparison to other systems of governance, democracy is the most desirable form of rule presently available. What I do doubt, however, is the validity of democratic peace theory. The case of ancient Athens points to a different conclusion.⁶⁴ Aristophanes’ anti-war comedies in general, and the *Acharnians* in particular, portray a tension between democracy and peace. The fact that Aristophanes deems it necessary to depict on the stage the separation of democracy from Polemos (War) is significant. This should give us pause; perhaps the relationship between democracy and war is not as repulsive as some modern scholars would have us to believe.

In case I am misunderstood, I am not arguing that democracy should be rejected in favour of other governing systems less prone to warfare; far from it. Instead I would

⁶² Dixon, “Democracy and the Management of International Conflict,” 17; Keane, *Violence and Democracy*, 17-20; Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, 146-7; and Morgan and Campbell, “Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints and War: So Why Kant Democracies Fight?,” 189, among others.

⁶³ The most passionate proponent of this view is Spencer R. Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998).

⁶⁴ See David Pritchard, “How Do Democracy and War Affect Each Other? –The Case Study of Ancient Athens,” *Polis* 24 /2 (2008): 328-353.

highlight that if, indeed, democracy has a tendency to gravitate towards warfare we must stay alert to that reality. Consequently, one of Dikaiopolis main undertaking in the *Acharnians*, as we shall see, is vilifying war and beautifying peace in the context of democratic politics.

At another level, the depiction of Dionysus as a democratic deity, it would seem to me, is also related to Aristophanes impeachment by Cleon on charges of anti-democratic sentiments (i.e., the slandering of the demos). By making Dionysus the god of democracy, Aristophanes attempts to rebuke those charges. For example, by portraying Dionysus as a democratic god, Aristophanes inadvertently portrays himself as a democratic playwright. After all we should not forget that Dionysus was the patron god of comedy; a point that Aristophanes emphasizes constantly in his plays.

1.4 Laughter & Comedy

Comedy is a genre whose success is measured by the quality of humour, wit and (hopefully humour-generated) laughter. Humour is indispensable to the art of the comic poet, mostly because it is highly effective for communication purposes, especially in the area of persuasion. As Goodrich perceptively points out, “Humor persuades in large part because it attracts attention, it is engaging and engaged...it allows for the possibility of persuasion, even if it does not on the given occasion persuade, or at least not immediately.”⁶⁵ Hence, it is not surprising that humour plays a central role in marketing; the most successful advertisements are usually those that contain humour. Humour compels people to watch, laugh and more importantly to *remember*.⁶⁶ In the field of political comedy even if one were to suggest that spectators laugh one way, but vote another, this by no means diminishes the impact of political comedy.

Prior to delving into the topics of humour and wit, a word about laughter. Laughter is a purely physiological reaction that can be triggered by physical and non-physical triggers alike and is observed in humans from infancy. In terms of somatic effects it has been suggested that laughter provides relief from stress and reduces discomfort and/or pain by releasing pain-killing, euphoria-producing endorphins, enkephalins, dopamine, and adrenaline; all of which contribute to one’s overall mental and physical health. As a result of its therapeutic properties laughter has been used in the

⁶⁵ Goodrich, “Satirical Legal Studies,” 505.

⁶⁶ Craig and Sternthal, “Humor in Advertising,” 12.

counter-conditioning of anger responses, as well as in the systematic desensitization to fear.⁶⁷ For Nelson, *An Introduction to Comedy* (1992), philosophers and literary theorists can be divided between those who emphasize laughter's healthful and procreative aspects and those who find laughter (for the most part) derisive, belligerent, or objectionable.

But what is humour? We know that humour only begins to be appreciated in early childhood in the form of simple jokes while their sophistication increases proportionally with age. The incongruity theory, the superiority theory and the release theory are some of the theories that one encounters in the literature and which seek to explain the nature and function of humour-related laughter. The incongruity theory, in particular states that laughter arises from surprise, the unexpected, or the contrary to what we consider "normal". An example of incongruous humour is the following:

Prayer: "What is sanity?"

Response: "An illusion caused by alcohol deficiency."⁶⁸

The joke here rests upon the universal belief that identifies sobriety with sanity and insanity with alcohol. Thus, when we are told otherwise, this contradiction combined with the brevity of the joke makes us laugh. What the above example also illustrates is that critical jokes draw attention to what we consider "normal" and force us to reconsider our established beliefs or at the very least contemplate them.

On the same subject but from a different angle, Freud suggests that we enjoy jokes for their pleasure-inducing abilities. As he puts it: "[joking] is an activity which aims at

⁶⁷ Ruch, "Exhilaration and Humor," 1993.

⁶⁸ Simpson's play *A Resounding Tinkle*, Act 1, scene 2, as quoted in Glasgow, *Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy*, 190.

deriving pleasure from mental processes” usually intellectual.⁶⁹ In reference to hostile jokes Freud argues that their appeal lies in their ability to make “aggressiveness or criticism possible against persons in exalted positions who claim to exercise authority.”⁷⁰ Even more important is his observation that sophisticated jokes are intrinsically critical representations of truth and of society in general. In support of this argument he quotes a popular 18th century joke between a marriage broker and a groom,

Marriage-broker: “What do you require of your bride?”

Prospective Groom: “She must be beautiful, she must be rich, and educated.”

Marriage-Broker: “Very good, but I count that as making three matches.”

Freud suggests that the object of the above joke is not only directed at the groom but towards “institutions, people in their capacity as vehicles of institutions, dogmas” and in general views of life which “enjoy” so much respect that any objections to them can only be made under the mask of joke. In the specific case of humorous satire, Goodrich suggests that,

...[the] satirical tends to accentuate the humorous and the absurd. It drags the personal into the public domain so as to shock and to entertain. It indulges in the ad hominem dismissal and the punning play upon words so as to give vitality and presence to discourses that tend otherwise to float off into the ether of dormant abstraction. Humor is pleasing because, like Aristotle's accomplished metaphor, it offers a novel or boundary-crossing comparison. We laugh at the inversion of roles, the doubleness of meaning, or the rapid trajectory from one order to another. The comedian seeks to engage that desire for risk taking and for slippage. The rhetorical root of humour lies in a concern with persuasion or indeed seduction, with the pleasure of confrontation and the charge of conflict....⁷¹

⁶⁹ Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 139.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 149.

⁷¹ Goodrich, “Satirical Legal Studies,” 509.

Moliere's statement that "the duty of comedy is to correct men by amusing them" is especially apt in the case of Aristophanes.⁷² While the comedies of Aristophanes were highly entertaining he took pride at his comedies supposed wisdom. As we shall see in the course of our discussion Aristophanes goes to great lengths, especially in the parabasis, to highlight the fact that one of his main aims was to contribute to the polis' critical thinking. Prior to concluding our discussion of comic humour, a note. Combs and Nimmo deride social and behavioural scientists for their so-called "science of comedy." That is, studies that probe the "origins, sources, functions, types, and techniques of comic humour." In other words, what we have been summarizing up to this point. These authors claim that the problem with these methods, is that by approaching comedy in a clinical way - by dissecting humour the way a scientist dissects a frog - the object of study dies. Humour is no longer amusing and comedy is no longer funny.⁷³ True enough, but, what other way is there?

⁷² Moliere's saying is to be found in the preface to his most famous comedy, *Tartuffe*.

⁷³ Combs and Nimmo, *The Comedy of Democracy*, 6-7.

CHAPTER II. A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: WAR & OLD COMEDY

2.1 The Peloponnesian War

In Switzerland they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock!

Orson Welles

Even philosophers will praise war as ennobling mankind, forgetting the Greek who said: "War is bad in that it begets more evil than it kills."

Immanuel Kant

The following section focuses on the Peloponnesian War because a background to this conflict is essential in understanding the *Acharnians*. This war is chronicled in painstaking detail by the general-turned-historian, Thucydides. Thucydides' narration is filled with insights on international relations and human psychology. Overall, he paints an unflattering portrait of human nature in times of war-produced stress. He begins his narration by commenting that the Peloponnesian War differed from past wars because there was a deviation away from the traditional rules of war, namely, combat between armed factions. In this war there was torturing of civilians, execution of prisoners of war, killings of children, night time raids, and so forth. In other words, there was no "justice in war" or *jus in bello*. Each deviation and each massacre led to greater deviations and greater massacres, making the war a classic case of violence breeding greater violence. Each new atrocity also increased the level of mistrust, making peace talks gradually more difficult. By 425, the year that Aristophanes wrote the *Acharnians*, the radicals of the war party had replaced the moderates in prominence. These radicals, the likes of Cleon, were divisive figures in Athenian politics. In their advocacy for a more aggressive war they

appealed to the Athenians' desire for revenge while at the same time intimidating advocates of a negotiated peace by questioning their patriotism and courage.⁷⁴

The Peloponnesian War was also a multifaceted civil war. Unlike the Persian Wars that pitted Persians against Hellenes, the Peloponnesian War, or more appropriately the "Hellenic Civil War,"⁷⁵ pitted Dorian Hellenes against Ionian Hellenes. There was also fighting alongside class/economic lines. For instance, there was fighting between oligarchs (aristocratic, property-owning class) and democrats (plebeian, land-owning poor farmers, or landless poor). This was the case of Corcyra with Dorian oligarchs fighting Dorian democrats. As their name indicates the oligarchs constituted a numerical minority within their respective city-states while the democrats constituted a majority. On account of its complexity Victor Davis Hanson writes that the Peloponnesian War resembles more the "endless chaos of the Middle East...rather than the more conventional battles of World War II with clear-cut enemies, theatres, fronts, and outcomes."⁷⁶

Scholars identify two camps or "parties" in Athens and Sparta alike: the war parties and the peace parties. In regards to the Athenian war party scholars identify two subdivisions: the "war moderates" and the "war radicals." The war moderates included figures such as Pericles and other like-minded spirits who advocated a defensive, non-expansionary war. The objective of the Athenian war moderates was to wear down Sparta in order to obtain a negotiated peace whereby the Spartans, and their allies (especially

⁷⁴ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 48.

⁷⁵ Hanson, *A War like no Other*, xv.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, xv.

Corinth), accepted the new reality of a politically and economically powerful, imperial Athens. The radicals of the war party, on the other hand (i.e., Cleon), were determined “to wage an aggressive war” with the aim of defeating rather than simply wearing down Sparta.⁷⁷

In relation to the Athenian war and peace parties alike, Kagan makes it a point to emphasize that these terms are used for the sake of convenience and should not be confused with modern political parties. He writes:

Athenian politics typically involved shifting groups which came together, often around a man, sometimes an issue, occasionally with reference to both. There was little or no party discipline in the modern sense and only limited continuity. During wars, however, the issues tended to become more clear-cut than in peace, and the allegiance of the citizenry to a particular party more obvious and strong. There were surely nuances in people’s positions and no doubt individuals changed their views with changes in the situation.⁷⁸

In terms of the war’s origins, Thucydides distinguishes between profound and superficial causes. The most profound cause (*alethestate prophasis*) of the war, according to Thucydides, was Spartan fear. In particular, Sparta became uneasy at Athens’ growing power (1.23), because she feared losing her allies (i.e., Megara, Corinth, etc). In turn, Sparta relied on those alliances for help in subduing the frequent uprisings by her agricultural slaves, the helots.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Kagan, *A New History of the Peloponnesian War*, 95-6.

Accordingly, it was the helot situation that led historian De Ste. Croix to lay the blame for the war completely on Sparta. Insofar as Sparta was the only Greek state, “which held in a degrading servile status a very large number of fellow-Greeks” she could not allow another city to “reach a position of power from which it could threaten either herself or her allies.” If anyone were to “be held *immediately* responsible for the outbreak of the war” he continues, it would be the Spartans and their allies, especially the Corinthians. De Ste. Croix even goes as far as to argue that anyone who thinks otherwise has fallen prey to Dikaiopolis’ speech criticizing the Megarian embargo in the *Acharnians*. A speech, according to him, that “has probably done more than anything else to create the almost universal misconception of the nature and effects of the Megarian degree in modern times.”⁷⁹ While we will deal with Dikaiopolis’ speech regarding the Megarian degree in greater detail below, it suffices for now to say that while De Ste. Croix is correct in assigning much of the blame on Sparta, he is wrong to assign the *entire* blame on this city.

In defence of my argument I would bring to the attention of readers another historian, Donald Kagan, who is of a different mind about the same matter. The economic embargo against Megara, writes Kagan, was intended to punish the Megarians for helping the Corinthians in the Battle of Sybota (a naval battle between Corinth and Corcyra in 433) and to “issue a warning to them and to any other friends of Corinth to stay out of the affair.” In hindsight, Pericles’ action was unnecessary, according to Kagan, because “Sparta seemed to be exercising a restraining hand on most of her allies.” More decisively, the decree “had a very serious effect on the internal politics of Sparta” because

⁷⁹ Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 290-1, 371.

it gave the impression that Athens was attacking a Spartan ally without any provocation and it “reinforced the impression of Athens as a tyrant and aggressor,” something that played directly into the hands of the Spartan war party. Had Pericles’ judgement been better, argues Kagan, and had the Athenian irritation with the Megarians been less, he might have taken a gentler tone, avoided provocative actions, and allowed the friends of Athens and peace to keep their control of Spartan policy”. Had Pericles rescinded at the request of the second Spartan embassy war would *not* have broken out. It was in this respect, continues Kagan, that “the enemies of Pericles were right” in fixing on the Megarian Decree the cause of the war and “Pericles as its instigator.”⁸⁰

That being said, Thucydides’ thesis that a shift in political power was the most basic cause in the war is widely accepted in the literature and no counterargument will be offered here. For example, when Sparta and Athens shared equal political power there was no violence between them. War was deterred by the equality of power. However, as Athens begun expanding in terms of economy and naval power with no sign of abatement Sparta begun fearing that Athens would become the dominant power in Greece. If Athens were to become the Greek hegemon it would have been only a matter of time before the Peloponnesian League, an alliance of Doric city-states led by Sparta, was dissolved. The dissolution of the Peloponnesian League, in turn, would have led to the dissolution of Spartan society (i.e., a military society relying on agricultural slaves for its functioning).

Following her defeat in 404 Athens found herself economically bankrupt, with no allies, and no protecting wall. As for Sparta, long-term events proved that the war actually undermined her power. For instance, she was obliged to free many helots as a reward for

⁸⁰ Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, 352.

their military services during the war. In addition, the loss of Spartan warriors further exacerbated the phenomenon of *oliganthropia*, a term coined by Aristotle in reference to Sparta's small population. The loss of Spartan warriors was one of the main factors behind Sparta's defeat by Thebes in 371. That defeat led to the dismantling of the Peloponnesian League and the loss of Messinia, a neighbouring territory that had been supplying Sparta with grain and helots. Ultimately, that loss led to the disappearance of Sparta's military society. Considering the fact that Sparta had entered the Peloponnesian War in order to preserve her structural integrity the irony runs deep.

In terms of pre-war negotiations, one fatal flaw of both the Athenian and Spartan war parties was their failure to take into account the uncertainty of the future. This, combined with a sense of overconfidence, led to some serious policy miscalculations during the negotiations prior to the outbreak of hostilities. For instance, one of Kagan's main arguments is that Pericles underestimated the strength of the Spartan war party and overestimated the strength of the Spartan peace party. As a result of those miscalculations Pericles adapted a non-compromising stance during the pre-war negotiations that bolstered the popularity of the Spartan war party. That being said, it should be noted that our knowledge of domestic Spartan politics is limited. Broadly speaking, however, in Sparta there were no oligarchic/democratic divisions as in the case of Athens. In Sparta the divisions were between the Ephors and the two Spartan Kings who rarely agreed with each other. For the most part a strong king, with the help of the *Gerousia* (Senate), was able to dominate the powerful Ephors, while the opposite was the case with a weak

king.⁸¹ In our particular case, prior to the outbreak of the hostilities, Pericles overestimated the influence of his personal friend, King Archidamus, over the Ephors and other pro-war elements in Sparta. According to Kagan, if Pericles had granted the Spartan request to lift the economic embargo on Megara, a Spartan ally, the war would not have broken out in 431. This is not to deny Thucydides' claim that the true cause of the war was Spartan fear of Athenian expansionism. Rather, the argument here is that the war did not have to break out in 431; it could have come later. More than that, perhaps it could have been avoided altogether.

⁸¹ Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 29. Sparta had a diarchic structure with two kings, one from the Agiad and one from the Euryontid royal lineages. In regards to the power of Ephors and their lording it over the kings, Spartan history is replete with examples. The Ephors "suggested" to King Dorieus a second marriage when his first would not produce heirs (Herodotus, *Hist. V*) and Archidamus was fined for marrying a short wife on the argument that the union would produce "Kinglets" instead of "Kings" for Sparta (Plut. *Lives*). See Aristotle's (*Politics* 1270b-1271a) for an unflattering description of the Ephors' political power.

2.2 Aristophanes' *Babylonians*

Following the Persian invasions that threatened the freedom of all Greek city-states, fear at Persia gave birth to the Delian League, a military alliance, in 478. This was a voluntary entity whose goal was to ensure the future freedom of Greek city-states.⁸² The Delian League was hijacked by Athens after Pericles transferred the league's treasury from the politically neutral island of Delos to the Athenian Acropolis in 454. The treasury in particular, and the Delian League in general, played a crucial role in eventually transforming Athens into an imperial power. For instance, Athens began demanding ever-increased amounts of contributions from her allies, effectively transforming dues into tribute. When allied city-states rebelled under the burden of heavy taxations, those rebellions were crushed swiftly and violently by Athens. Consequently, when Sparta demanded that Athens give back to the Greeks their autonomy, prior to the outbreak of the war, they were referring to the hijacking of the Delian League by Athens. Of interest is also the fact that Athens encouraged and sponsored the spread of democracy to other Greek city-states via this league. Idealistically, one could argue that this democratic proselytizing stemmed from the belief that democracy, as a form of governance, was preferable to that of oligarchy. Less idealistically, one could argue that these democratic "conversions" were encouraged in order to secure Athenian domination and assure the protection of Athenian interests in the Greek world.

Ultimately, it was within this background that the *Babylonians* (426) was performed at the City Dionysia. In this (lost) comedy Aristophanes depicts a Chorus of

⁸² Perry et al., *Western Civilization*, 61.

branded slaves working in a mill operated by their master, Dēmos. The dominant theory in the literature is that those slaves were an allegorical representation of the allied-city states, and Dēmos an allegory for democratic Athens. The only exception is Norwood who argues that Aristophanes would not have dared, or was not “bold enough”, to stage such a performance at a time when Athens was “fighting to keep her empire” in the face of possible insurgents (such as Mytilene in 428).⁸³ Another objection (related to the first) raised by the same author is that even *if* Aristophanes had been bold enough to stage such a performance, he would not have dared to do so at the Theatre of Dionysus - a place swarming with envoys from the allied city-states.⁸⁴ In terms of Norwood’s first objection, we can argue with fair confidence that Aristophanes was indeed bold enough, and for this argument we can turn to the parabasis of the *Acharnians*. Here, one reads:

Chorus Leader:...Never yet, since our didaskalos first directed comic Choruses, (*trugikoīs*) has he come forward to tell the audience he is intelligent (*dexios estin*). But since he has been accused by his enemies before Athenians quick to make up their minds, as one who makes comedy of our polis (*kōmōdeī ten polin emōn*) and outrages the demos (*kai ton dēmon kathavrizei*) (631) he now asks to defend himself before Athenians just as quick to change their minds... That said, let Cleon hatch his plots and build his traps (659)...for Good and Just (*dikaion*) will be my allies (*chimmachon estai*) (661-662).

⁸³ Norwood, “The Babylonians of Aristophanes,” 2.

⁸⁴ As a result of these objections Norwood is led to propose a different plot. He suggests the following: a Chorus of wild Asiatic worshippers of Dionysus are, upon arriving in Athens, thrown into prison and branded by Athenian authorities but are later rescued by Dionysus. When envoys from the allied city-states arrive bearing gifts and flowery speeches to Athens, Dionysus (in his capacity as an Athenian representative) rejects them. Dionysus departs with his Asiatic followers but not before delivering a damaging speech towards the allies and Athenian officials (Norwood, “The Babylonians of Aristophanes,” 9-10).

For those unfamiliar with the term “parabasis,” it was a conventional structural device of Old Comedy that usually took place in the middle of play. Parabasis stems from the verb *parabaino* “stepping aside.” During the parabasis the dramatic action of the play was suspended. The actors would exit the stage leaving the Chorus Leader to speak directly to the audience on the playwrights’ behalf.⁸⁵

This leaves us with the problem of place, the Theatre of Dionysus. Norwood’s scepticism in this regard is not completely without basis. We know that Cleon laid charges against Aristophanes not only for slandering Athens but, more specifically, for slandering Athens *in front of outsiders*. Dikaiopolis (aka Aristophanes) acknowledges this in lines 502- 08 of the *Acharnians* where, under the disguise of a beggar, he claims:

Dikaiopolis: Do not be aggrieved with me, gentleman (*andres*) spectators, if, though a beggar, I am ready to address the Athenians about the polis while making (*poiōn*) *trugōdia*. For even *trugōdia* knows what is just (*to gar dikaion*). And what I say will be shocking (*deina*), but right (*dikaia*). This time Cleon will not accuse me of defaming (*kakōs legō*) the city in the presence of foreigners; for we are by ourselves; it’s the Lenaean competition (*Lenaiō t’ agon*), and no foreigners are here yet; neither tribute nor troops have arrived from the allied cities. This times we are by ourselves, clean-hulled – for I count the resident foreigners as the bran of our populace.

The above lends itself to two very different interpretations. Either: (a) Aristophanes intentionally staged the *Babylonians* at the City Dionysia in a calculated effort to embarrass and shame Cleon about Athens’ foreign policy at the international level; or (b) a young Aristophanes made the mistake of staging the *Babylonians* at the City Dionysia out of theatrical inexperience. The strength of the first interpretation depends on the trustworthiness of Isocrates’ (436-338 BC) evaluation of the City Dionysia. According to him, the public display of war orphans and tribute from the allied cities at the City

⁸⁵ Rosen, *Aristophanes*, 1, x.

Dionysia was “mere insolence and shamelessness, perfectly designed to inspire resentment, in the case of tribute, and to satisfy malice, in the exposure of the losses caused by war.”⁸⁶ If this was the case, then, as already mentioned, we can argue that Aristophanes choose the Theatre of Dionysus in order to chastise Athenian imperialism with his *Babylonians*. In terms of the second hypothesis, it should be pointed out that the *Acharnians*, a play likewise critical of Athenian policy, was performed at the Rural Dionysia. Subsequent plays who were either critical of Athenian institutions or Athenian figures were performed almost exclusively at the Rural Dionysia.

Aristophanes’ *Babylonians*, insofar as it criticized the *dēmos*, transgressed the unwritten law⁸⁷ prohibiting comic poets from criticizing just that (see § 1.3). In this respect, Cleon’s accusation that Aristophanes was making fun of Athens (*kōmōdeī ten polin*) and was insulting the *demos* (*kai ton dēmon kathavrizei*) was true. At the same time it was also a cunning rhetorical ploy on Cleon’s part. In all likelihood the real reason that Cleon pressed charges against Aristophanes was because he (Cleon) was personally attacked in the *Babylonians*. However, since he could not file charges on a personal level he opted instead for the “demotic slander” accusation. This, apart from being an act of personal revenge, was also what we would today term “good PR” since it allowed Cleon to present himself as the champion of the Athenian *demos*.

⁸⁶ Micheline, “Isocrates’ Civic Invective: Acharnians and On the Peace,” 123.

⁸⁷ On the argument that this was a feature of class conflict in Athens and that no specific law existed protecting the institution of Athenian democracy from comic ridicule see Atkinson, “Curbing the Comedians: Cleon versus Aristophanes and Syracosius’ Decree,” 59.

However, a funny thing happened. Contrary to the claim by the Old Oligarch that the demos did not tolerate any mockery at the hands of comic poets, Aristophanes' *Babylonians* was awarded first prize by the judges.⁸⁸ Following that, Cleon's impeachment of Aristophanes before the *bouleutērion*⁸⁹ came to nothing. If that was not enough, the sequel to the *Babylonians*, the *Acharnians*, also received first prize. In other words, the judges who represented the Athenian demos at these contests rather than punishing Aristophanes saw fit to reward him, while the *Boulē*, a thoroughly democratic institution, saw fit to acquit him.

This, it would seem to me, presents us with two possibilities: either (a) the Athenian demos was not as sensitive as the Old Oligarch makes them out to be; or (b) the Athenian demos did not perceive the *Babylonians* as being an anti-democratic comedy. Of course there is also the possibility that both (a) and (b) are true. That being said, let us explore the possibility of (b). Was the *Babylonians*, a comedy that depicted an imperial Athens lording it over her allies and treating them as slaves (rather than equals) a critique of democracy? Or to rephrase it, is the image of a state that has grown disproportionately greater in power to other states to the point of despotic governance a critique of democratic practices? Is it not possible that the *Babylonians* was in reality a critique of tyranny?

Let me explain. We know that at the domestic level Athens remained a democracy. We also know that she encouraged (some would say coerced) her allies to adhere to democratic governance as well. Where the paradox arises, I would argue, is at

⁸⁸ A panel of ten judges; one from each of the ten Attic tribes. All were chosen by lot.

⁸⁹ The *Boule* (Council) was a thoroughly democratic institution and at the time it consisted of 500 men chosen from the ten Attic demoi.

the international level. Here, we see Athens practicing a double standard; while she remains a democracy for herself, she becomes a tyrant to the other states. What is ironic about this is of course is that Athens claimed that she hated tyranny. The apotheosis of the tyrant-slayers, Aristogeiton and Harmodius, alongside with the practice of political ostracism, were instituted with one goal in mind – the avoidance of tyranny. Yet, under the leadership of Pericles, Athens betrayed the democratic principle at the international level by becoming a tyranny to her allies.

Many of the comic poets, I would argue, recognized this hypocrisy, just as they recognized Pericles' involvement in transforming Athens into a dictatorial power. Accordingly, this is why Cratinus calls Pericles a "very great tyrant."⁹⁰ The Athenian demos seems to have recognized this as well, which would explain the *Babylonians'* 1st prize and the acquittal of Aristophanes. Thus, contrary to Cleon's claims, Aristophanes was *not* slandering the Athenian demos. Rather, Aristophanes was slandering the politicians who were advocating continuing a war in the name of Athenian democracy, a principle they were in fact violating.

2.3 The *Acharnians*

The *Acharnians* was performed at some unknown location in the Attic countryside as part of the Rural Dionysia festival. This play was Aristophanes third; the previous two being the *Banqueters* (427) and the *Babylonians* (426). The *Acharnians* (similar to the

⁹⁰ Cratinus, *Cheirons*, fr. 258 K-A.

Babylonians) won first prize at the competition. The second prize went to Cratinus *Stormtossed* and the third to Eupolis' *New Moons*.⁹¹

Despite the fact that Aristophanes *Babylonians* received the first-prize and despite the fact that Aristophanes managed to avoid impeachment, the fact that we see Aristophanes defending himself against Cleon's accusations in the *Acharnians* suggests that Aristophanes image did not escape unscathed in the court of public opinion. Cleon's accusations, which implied that Aristophanes was unpatriotic and an anti-democrat, demanded a response from Aristophanes. That response came in the form of the *Acharnians* as produced the following year. Although a multidimensional anti-war play, the *Acharnians* is also Aristophanes "Apology." Here, among other things, Aristophanes (via the figure of Dikaiopolis) depicts himself not only as an Athenian but as Greek patriotic figure, one whose political solutions, unlike those of the war party, are shown to be beneficial to Athens and the enemy city-states, leading to a win-win situation for all Greek city-states.

⁹¹ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 48.

2.3.1 The “Acharnians” and the Peloponnesian War

Aristophanes named his play the “*Acharnians*” after the inhabitants of the Attic deme of Acharnae. This deme was one of 140 demes in Attica and it belonged to the Oeneis Tribe. Acharnae was located about seven miles from Athens in the northwest plain of Attica on the mountain range of Parnes (see map).

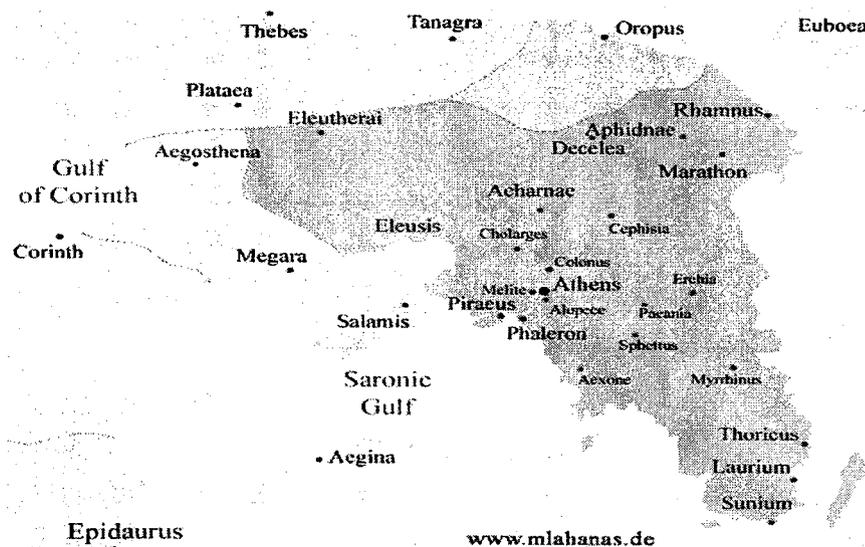


Figure 2. Map of ancient Attica.⁹²

All in all, Acharnae was a self-sustaining rural community that grew its own grains, wine, fruit trees and olives, while access to plenty of grazing fields ensured livestock and its by-products (i.e., meat, wool, dairy). In addition, Parnes provided the Acharnian population with plenty of honey and trees which in turn supported the Acharnians’ coal industry, their main export.

⁹² Source: <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Cities/Acharnae.html>

One thing that distinguished the Acharnian men from the rest of the Attic tribes was their large population. That meant two things: a large hoplite segment and the largest representation in the *bouleuterion* (Council House);⁹³ two facts that translated into significant political power. We begin with the large number of hoplites and its implications for the Peloponnesian War, including Archidamian and Periclean military strategy. According to Thucydides the Acharnian men contributed around 3,000 hoplites to the army, a figure that the same author describes as significant. How significant one asks? We begin with an interesting remark by Thucydides in regards to King Archidamus and the Acharnian men. We are told that when Archidamus realized that Pericles was going to pursue a defensive war strategy, that is, withdraw the rural population behind the safety of the Athenian walls and abandon the countryside to the mercy of the ravaging invaders, Archidamus counted on the Acharnians to foil Pericles' plan. Insofar as the Acharnians relied on their land for their livelihood, they stood to lose the most from Pericles' strategy. Archidamus, was of the mind that the Acharnian men would not have been able to tolerate more than a couple of years of raids before forcing Pericles to engage in a land battle. In illustration of Archidamus' strategy, Thucydides describes one

⁹³ In the *bouleuterion* the Acharnian men were represented to the tune of 22 councilmen. The Council was composed of 500 councilmen who were drawn from a total of 140 demes leading Dow, "Thucydides and the Number of Acharnian Hoplitai," 72, to claim that no "other deme had nearly so many *bouletai*." A more sceptical reader would recall Aristophanes' complaint regarding Cleon's attempt to impeach him at the *bouleuterion* for his *Babylonians* (*Acharnians* 375-83), as well as his bragging that he managed to persuade the *bouletai* to acquit him. One might also be amused at this young, cocky poet as he embarks on a new round of persuasion in a play entitled the "*Acharnians*".

particular raid where Archidamus sought to achieve exactly this, namely, provoke the Acharnian men into battle. He writes:

The reason why Archidamus remained in order of battle at Acharnae during this incursion, instead of descending into the plain, is said to have been this. He hoped that the Athenians might possibly be tempted by the multitude of their youth and the unprecedented efficiency of their service to come out to battle and attempt to stop the devastation of their lands...he tried if they could be provoked to a sally by the spectacle of a camp at Acharnae...and it seemed likely that such an important part of the state as the three thousand heavy infantry of the Acharnians would refuse to submit to the ruin of their property, and would force a battle on the rest of the citizens. On the other hand, should the Athenians not take the field during this incursion, he could then fearlessly ravage the plain in future invasions, and extend his advance up to the very walls of Athens. After the Acharnians had lost their own property they would be less willing to risk themselves for that of their neighbours; and so there would be division in the Athenian counsels. These were the motives of Archidamus for remaining at Acharnae (2.20 3-4).

Archidamus' scheme did not manage to provoke a battle, although this was not due to lack of trying on the part of the Acharnians. As Archidamus had correctly guessed, the Acharnian men *did* become infuriated at the destruction of their lands, and *did* try to force the rest of the Attic army into a battle. Turning to Thucydides again, we learn that:

Knots were formed in the streets and engaged in hot discussion; for if the proposed sally was warmly recommended, it was also in some cases opposed...Foremost in pressing for the sally were the Acharnians, as constituting no small part of the army of the state, and as it was their land that was being ravaged. In short, the whole polis was in a most excited state (2.2.1).

We know why the Acharnians wanted to fight, namely, to save their lands from devastation. But why did (some of) the Athenians oppose such a fight? According to military historian Hanson, Pericles and like-minded Athenians feared the Spartan

phalanx, the most superior land army at the time.⁹⁴ In fact, when the Athenians did engage the Spartan phalanx twice in the course of the 27-year war, Athens lost both times (see Appendix I: The Spartan Phalanx). In all fairness to Pericles, during the pre-war debates, he had made clear to all Athenians, including the Acharnian men, that a land battle was to be avoided. Then why, one asks, did the Acharnian men rescind on a policy that they had initially supported?

The answer lies with Josiah Ober's insight that half of the Athenian voting population lived on Attic grain. The fact that Pericles had managed to convince such a large block of voters to support the "city-oriented defence plan," argues Ober was not so much a testament to Pericles' persuasive skills but rather to the overflowing imperial treasury that "allowed the state the luxury of feeding the rural population without overly great economic strain."⁹⁵ However, when the savings of the imperial treasury were depleted, feeding the population became no longer an easy task. Adding to the above, the miserly conditions of being a refugee in an overcrowded city, and the suffering brought about by the plague in 430, and it does not become hard to see why the Acharnians rescinded their support of Pericles' military strategy.

In all of this, what is remarkable is Pericles' handling of the "Acharnian crisis." Rather than calling an Assembly meeting and trying to persuade the Acharnians to recognize the suicidal folly of their demand and repeat the wisdom of his military strategy (in other words, to engage in a democratic, deliberative dialogue), Pericles did the opposite. Turning once again to Thucydides, we read:

⁹⁴ Hanson, *A War Like No Other*, 2005.

⁹⁵ Ober, *Fortress Attica: Defence of the Athenian Land Frontier 404-322B.C.*, 26.

Pericles was the object of general indignation (*orgē*); his previous counsels were totally forgotten; he was abused for not leading out the army which he commanded, and was made responsible for the whole of the public suffering (2.21)...[Pericles] seeing anger and infatuation just now in the ascendant, and of his wisdom (*ta arista phronōntas*), in refusing a sally would not call either Assembly or meeting of the people, fearing the fatal results of a debate inspired by passion (*orgē*) and not by prudence. Accordingly he addressed himself to the defence of the city, and kept it as quiet as possible, though he constantly sent out cavalry to prevent raids on the lands near the city from flying parties of the enemy (2.22).

To the above one clarification: Thucydides writes that Pericles *refused* to call an Assembly meeting. However, this is somewhat misleading. Pericles could not have “refused” to call an Assembly meeting because, according to Donald Kagan, the constitutional power to call an Assembly meeting rested solely with the *Prytaneis* (Presidents of the Assembly). This leads the same author to argue that the *Prytaneis* held Pericles in high esteem and therefore complied with his wishes.⁹⁶ The implications of this are significant. For example, Pericles used his personal influence to subvert Athenian constitutional democracy. Pericles, as Thucydides indicates, feared that the Achaean men, insofar as they were governed by passion, would have forced an unwise policy on Athens. If one were to interpret this in the language of Political Theory, one could say that Pericles sought out the temporary suspension of democratic governance during wartime. Obviously Pericles was weary of democracy during wartime. During wartime, according to Periclean thinking, the prudent leader must silence the voices of the majority because the majority is governed by their passions and are concerned only with their self-interests. By contrast, the prudent leader is governed by reason and is concerned with the

⁹⁶ Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 69.

interests of the *entire* state. Put in other words, the road to autocracy from democracy is paved with patriotic intentions.

But surely, the patriotic reader might object at this point, the fact that Pericles was concerned with the well-being of the *entire* Attica must count for something. True enough. However, taking into consideration that Periclean policy sacrificed *agricultural* Athens on the altar of war in order to preserve *naval/imperial* Athens, how could anyone maintain that the Pericles' policy was truly impartial? However, even if we were to overlook this point and pretend that Periclean policy was impartial, at what point, and to what extent, should democratic principles be compromised during wartime?

2.3.2 Aristophanes' Motivations in Naming his *Acharnians* the "Acharnians"

Aristophanes seems to have recognized the fact that the Acharnian men were interested in protecting their lands and had little attraction for a war. For instance, we know that once the same men realized that, contrary to earlier predictions, this conflict was not going to be short, they turned away from Pericles and the moderate democrats. At the same time, however, the Acharnians' anger and thirst for revenge drove this large voting population straight into the arms of the war radicals. The war radicals, who had emerged from the folds of the Democratic Party after the death of Pericles, advocated an *offensive* war strategy that envisioned not only the maintaining but also the enlargement of the Athenian empire.

In terms of the Attic countryside, if Pericles' defensive strategy of letting the land go to waste every summer was flawed, the offensive strategy would have been disastrous for the Attic farmland. Indeed, during the second phase of the war (also known as the Decelean War) the Attic farmers lost complete access to their lands following the establishment of a permanent Spartan army base at the village of Decelea in 413. In the final analysis, the interests of all rural Attic inhabitants, including the Acharnians, rested with a negotiated peace. As already mentioned, however, the anger that the Acharnian men felt towards the Spartans, blinded them to this truth. Ultimately, if the peace party was to ever achieve their goal of a negotiated peace, they had to persuade the Acharnian voters to recognize this truth.

Aristophanes' decision to devote an entire play to this population segment was part of this persuasion effort. By flattering them, that is, by naming his play after them, Aristophanes' aim was to persuade the Acharnian men to change their minds about the peace (626-30).

2.3.3 The *Acharnians*: Summary Plot

The summary of the *Acharnians* is as follows: An Athenian farmer by the name of Dikaiopolis (Just-Polis), tired of the Peloponnesian War, attends the Athenian Assembly determined to advance the peace-agenda (1-60). He quickly realizes that his fellow-citizens are adverse to any peace talks due to their optimistic outlook over the war. A frustrated and defiant Dikaiopolis side-steps the Assembly and dispatches a negotiator by the name Amphitheos as an envoy to Sparta with instructions to negotiate a private peace for himself and his family (130). After Amphitheos delivers the peace treaty, Dikaiopolis returns to his home in the country and begins celebrating the Rural Dionysia.

This religious festival, however, is interrupted by a chorus of angry Acharnian men who accuse Dikaiopolis of treason and attempt to stone him to death (280-320). A desperate Dikaiopolis forces the Acharnian Chorus to grant him a defence hearing by “kidnapping” a bag of Acharnian coal, which in the fantastical world of comedy, is treated by all involved as an Acharnian child. During his defence, rather than focusing on the justice of his private peace Dikaiopolis focuses instead on the cause(s) and justice of the war. To be exact, Dikaiopolis implies that as a result of unjust Athenian foreign policies the Spartans were justified in striking the first blow. Dikaiopolis concludes his speech by arguing that, if the Spartans had committed the same acts against the Athenians, they [Athenians] would have reacted in a similar manner (491-556).

Dikaiopolis entire “defence scene” is a parody of Euripides’ lost tragedy *Telephus*; a tragedy that was itself a revision of the legend of Telephus, the King of Mysia. In this tragedy, Telephus argues in front of the Achaean leaders (the likes of

Agamemnon, Achilles and Odysseus) that had the Trojans treated the Greeks the same way they were treated, the Greeks would have acted in the same manner as the Trojans.

Dikaiopolis' speech manages to convince half of his audience. This leads to a break-up of the once unified Chorus into two factions: a pro-war and a pro-peace faction. The pro-peace faction allies itself with Dikaiopolis, while the pro-war faction allies itself with the bellicose general Lamachus (Great-Battler). In the ensuing agon Dikaiopolis ridicules and parodies the warrior ethic embodied in the figure of Lamachus. The agon, however, ends in an impasse. Lamachus swears that he will continue fighting the enemy-states while Dikaiopolis swears that he will be friendly with the enemy-states (620).

As a result of his private peace Dikaiopolis establishes a private agora and, true to his word, trades only with merchants from Megara and Thebes, two enemy states. In addition, Dikaiopolis refuses to trade with Lamachus and refuses to share his peace with anyone from the war party. The first man to be turned away is Dercetes of Phyle, a historical figure who was in all likelihood a war supporter. The second man to be turned away is a newlywed Athenian soldier who likewise begs Dikaiopolis for some peace so he could stay home with his bride. Dikaiopolis' makes a sole exception in the case of a young bride. Arguing that she is a woman - and thereby an innocent victim of the war who does not deserve to suffer - Dikaiopolis gives her some drops of "peace".

The play ends with the return of Lamachus from his military exhibition, wounded and crying out in pain (1190-1227). Lamachus' cries of pain are contrasted with the hedonistic cries of a now-drunk Dikaiopolis. (The underlying message here being that war brings pain and peace pleasure). The play ends with a festive, drunken procession marching out of the stage with the Chorus and the Chorus Leader following Dikaiopolis

while singing “Hail the Champion”(1235). According to one author, the *Acharnians* was the comedy that established Aristophanes’ reputation as a writer in ancient Athens.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ MacDowell, “Aristophanes and Kallistratos,” 25.

CHAPTER III. DESIRING PEACE

3.1 *Acharnians*' Opening Scene: Lines 1-60

War is the father of all things.

Heraclitus

Peace and not war is the father of all things.

Ludwig von Mises

The opening scene of the *Acharnians* is the Athenian Assembly at dawn. This is the only Aristophanic comedy where the opening scene takes place in the Assembly, Athens' designated political space.⁹⁸ The only man present is the protagonist, a middle-aged man, Dikaiopolis. His name is not provided to the audience until line 406; no doubt a deliberate strategy by Aristophanes that does not become evident until Dikaiopolis delves into the justice of Athenian policies. Dikaiopolis is shown carrying a walking stick

⁹⁸ In the *Birds* the opening scene takes place in a wooded, rocky landscape; in the *Knights* and the *Clouds* inside a private house; in the *Frogs* in a road leading to Hercules' house; in *Assemblywomen* a street outside Agathon's house; in the *Wasps* in the front yard of an Athenian house; in *Lysistrata* in an anonymous Athenian neighbourhood after dawn, in *Plutus* in an anonymous Athenian public square; and in *Peace* in a farmhouse stable.

and a large wallet. As he sits and waits in the empty Assembly we become privy to his contemplative monologue.⁹⁹

The opening line to the *Acharnians*, similar to the opening lines of almost all of Aristophanes' comedies, consists of words of complaint leading one to wonder about the connection between the pains of life and comedy. We hear Dikaiopolis complaining about the numerical inequality between his delights and his pains.

Dikaiopolis: How often I've been bitten to my very heart! My delights? Scant, quite scant—just four! My pains? Heaps by the umpteen million loads! Let's see, what delight have I had worthy of delectation? I know—its something my heart rejoiced to see (5): those five talents Cleon had to disgorge. That made me sparkle! I love the Knights for that deed, “a worthy thing for Greece!” (quoting Euripides' *Telephus*) (9) But then I had another pain, quite tragic: when I was waiting open-mouthed for Aeschylus, the announcer cried, “Theognis, bring your Chorus on!” How do you think that made my heart quake? But I had another delight, when “Once Upon a Calf” Dexitheus came on to sing Boetian-style (14). But just this year I died on the rack when I saw Chaeris¹⁰⁰ creeping on to play the Orthian tune. But never since my first bath have my brows been as soap stung as they are now, when the Assembly's scheduled for a regular dawn meeting, and here's an empty Pnyx: (19) everybody's gossiping in the market as up and down they dodge the ruddled rope.¹⁰¹ The *Prytaneis* (Presidents) aren't even here. No, they'll come late, and when they do you can't imagine how they'll shove each other for the front row, streaming down en masse. But they don't care at all about making peace. O city, city! I am always the very first to come to the Assembly and take my seat. Then, in my solitude I sigh (*stenō*), (30) I yawn (*kechina*), I stretch myself (*skordinōmai*), I fart (*perdomai*), I wonder (*aporō*), I write (*grafō*), pluck my beard, I calculate (*logizomai*), while I gaze into the countryside (*agron*) and pine for peace, loathing the urban (*asty*) and yearning (*pothōn*) for my own deme (*dēmon*), that never cried “buy coal,” “(34) buy vinegar,”

⁹⁹ The only other dramatic figure prone to contemplative trances is Plato's Socrates. In the *Symposium* (174d), Socrates is depicted as entering into such a trance while walking towards the house of the tragic poet Agathon on account of Agathon's victory where Aristophanes is also a guest. However, whereas Aristophanes always allows his audience to eavesdrop on his protagonist's thoughts, Plato never does. (For those who would be surprised at the suggestion of Plato's dialogues as dramas, I would suggest James Arieti's book *Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Drama* (Savage: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991).

¹⁰⁰ An untalented lyre and pipe player.

¹⁰¹ Rope soaked with dye to mark late arrivals or early departures with transgressors being fined.

“buy oil”; it didn’t know the word “buy”; no, it produced everything itself, and the Buy Man was out of sight. So now I’m here, all set to shout, interrupt, revile the speakers, if anyone speaks of anything except peace (39).

Dikaiopolis lists only four pleasures compared to uncountable pains, leading to the suspicion that he is most likely exaggerating, exaggeration being of course one of comedy’s most effective humour-generating mechanisms. In the enumeration of his four pleasures the first on the list is to have watched Cleon pay a fine. This incident appears to have been historical¹⁰² in which case Dikaiopolis/Aristophanes pleasure at seeing Cleon suffer a financial pain is both real and vengeful. By adding that this was a “worthy thing for Greece” as opposed to a worthy thing for him, Dikaiopolis barely avoids our suspicion.¹⁰³

His ecstatic pleasure at seeing Cleon suffer is mitigated by a great tragic pain. Rather than seeing an eagerly awaited Aeschylean performance, Dikaiopolis has to endure a performance by Theognis, a tragic poet, renowned for the frigidity of his plays.¹⁰⁴ His suffering at watching a frigid tragedy is ameliorated by musical pleasure, although the pain of listening to an awful lyre player compromises this pleasure as well. A pattern of pleasure-pain-pleasure-pain intervals emerges, but rather than listing another

¹⁰² There is no consensus on this matter; MacDowell, “The Nature of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” 145, argues for a fictional interpretation suggesting that Aristophanes was probably mentioning a scene from a recent comedy, while Henderson, *Acharnians*, 57, n. 2, following ancient scholia, argues that this was a historical event.

¹⁰³ In the *Peace* another one of Cleon’s misfortunes, his death, is depicted as an even greater thing for Greece (269-83).

¹⁰⁴ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 57, n. 4.

pleasure Dikaiopolis names another pain, making it seem the greatest of all: political apathy.

Dikaiopolis' claims that his pleasures numbered only four whereby his pains are innumerable, suggest an hyperbole. True enough, Dikaiopolis names only two pleasures: a political-pleasure and a music-pleasure (rather than four); and three pains: a tragic-pain, a music-pain, and a political-pain. Apart from that, Dikaiopolis' claim that his biggest pain is the political pain of political apathy is surprising. In 425, the Athenians were enjoying "radical" democracy, something that included direct representation and the freedom of all citizens to take the floor. The downside to this system was that citizenship was limited to male, adult, freeborn Athenians. Nonetheless, in comparison to Athens' ancestral aristocratic system, the oligarchic system of Sparta, the theocratic system of Egypt, and the despotic system of Persia, the Athenian democratic system was by far the most egalitarian and representative. Yet, Dikaiopolis sees fit to complain that political apathy was his biggest pain by far; outweighing even the pain of having to endure frigid tragedies and atrocious music.

In terms of political theory the implications are significant. To quote John Rawls, unless "there is widespread participation in democratic politics by a vigorous and informed citizen body moved in good part by a concern for political justice and public good, even the best-designed political institutions will fall into the hands of those who hunger for power and military glory, or pursue narrow class and economic interests, to the exclusion of almost everything else."¹⁰⁵ To be sure, when Dikaiopolis finds himself in a heated agon with Lamachus (The Great-Battler) he uses the argument of limited

¹⁰⁵Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 144.

Assembly participation to undermine Lamachus' repeated claims of legitimacy. Hence, to Lamachus' indignant cry: "They [Athenians] elected me" (598), Dikaiopolis reply is, "Three cuckoos did!" And when an exasperated Lamachus cries out: "Oh Democracy! Will such talk be tolerated?" Dikaiopolis' prompt reply is: "No indeed, unless Lamachus draws his pay!"(618-619). This, taken in conjunction with Dikaiopolis' complaint that the *Prytaneis* (Presidents) do not care about peace (24) establishes a link (albeit a weak one) between political apathy and war: political apathy is said to be genial to war while political pathos is genial to peace.

Moving on, we turn to Dikaiopolis' physical and mental activities while waiting for his fellow citizens to arrive at the Assembly. The image of a sighing, yawning, stretching, farting, hair-plucking older man in Old Comedy is no surprise. On the contrary, it is to be expected since such taboo-breaking behaviours are vital to the generation of laughter. What is surprising, however, is the image of a wondering, composing, calculating, far-sighted man. These are the traits of philosophers and not of comic protagonists. Beginning with Aesop's stargazing proto-philosopher and Plato's Socrates, solitary contemplation was a something closely associated with philosophers. Thus, as Martha Nussbaum points out, this particular passage is indicative of a philosophic nature.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, the suggestion that Dikaiopolis is a philosophic/iambic/poetic creature might raise some eyebrows, especially because of the

¹⁰⁶ I am grateful to Martha Nussbaum for her helpful insights into Dikaiopolis' nature during her attendance at the *Peace and Conflict Resolution Lecture Series* sponsored by the Department of Religion at Concordia University, June 3, 2004.

real or perceived hostility between philosophy and poetry and to a lesser extent between comedy and philosophy (see Appendix II). Yet, if anything, the word theatre derives from the word *theoria* whose common root *thea* means to see, sight, gaze, look upon, behold, admire and contemplate. As a feminine noun *thea* suggests a viewed or seen thing, a sight or a spectacle, and is related to the verb *theomai*, to gaze at, to behold, especially with a sense of wonder and admiration. It can also include mental activity, as it does in the *Republic* (582c) and the *Theateus* (155d) where Plato connects philosophy with wonder.¹⁰⁷

To recapitulate, our contemplating yawning/stretching/hair-plucking/farting protagonist claims that he (a) yearns for peace, (b) loathes the urban area because it is insufficient in terms of providing basic living necessities, (c) desires his own deme because it is self-sufficient, and (e) will oppose all pro-war rhetoricians. Prior to introducing our first hypothesis that Aristophanes is hereby introducing an argument tracing the aetiology of war to non-sustainability, I would briefly divert the readers' attention to *Plutus* (408), a comedy written by Aristophanes in the twilight of his life.

In this comedy, one of the characters, Penia (personified Poverty) argues that she is often confused with Beggary. This, she argues, is an error because whereas the beggar "never possesses anything" the poor man on the other hand "lives thriftily and attentive to his work"; he might not have much but "he does not lack what he really needs" (550). Moreover, she continues, in comparison to Wealth, where men are "gouty, big-bellied, heavy of limb and scandalously stout"; with her they are "thin, wasp-waisted, and terrible to the foe" (560). Penia concludes her speech by asserting that, in comparison to Beggary

¹⁰⁷ Reinelt and Roach, *Critical Theory and Performance*, 428.

and Wealth, she produces men who “are worth more, both in mind and body.”¹⁰⁸ What Dikaiopolis and Penia share in common, or so it would seem to me, is a fundamental belief in the supremacy of self-sustainability or *autarkeia*.

The seeds of the argument linking *non-autarkeia* to war was first sowed by Dikaiopolis in the *Acharnians*. It comes to fruition in the work of Plato. In the *Republic* and within the context of Socrates’ inquiry to the definition of justice, the origin of the polis is traced to a lack of *autarkeia* (369b), while the sprouting of injustice in the polis emerges with the creation of the luxurious polis (372a). The luxurious polis, which consists of unnecessary wealth, is introduced after Glaucon’s contemptuous remark that the simple polis is more fitting for pigs rather than for humans (372e-373b). It should be noted that pigs are a powerful symbol in the *Acharnians* and are used by Aristophanes to convey the debasement of humanity as a result of war. (For instance, two starving Megarian girls are forced to disguise themselves as piglets in order to survive (735-45)). Socrates’ response to Glaucon (The Gleaming-One) is that luxuries place an increased demand on limited natural resources, which in turn leads to war with neighbouring states:

Socrates: We shall go to war as the next step, Glaucon—or what will happen?

Glaucon: What you say.

Socrates: And we are not yet to speak, said I, of any evil or good effect of war, but only to affirm that we have further discovered the origin of war, namely, from those things from which the greatest disasters, public and private, come to states when they come (373e-374a).

¹⁰⁸ On a similar note, it should be pointed out that in Euripides’ tragedy *Telephus* - which Aristophanes appropriates *en masse* for the *Acharnians* - a surviving fragment reads along the lines of: “a healthy poor man’s lot is better than that of a diseased rich man” (Fr. 714 as quoted in Heath, “Euripides’ *Telephus*,” 277).

According to the above, peace and *autarkia* are inseparable. But then this means that Dikaiopolis' search for peace, as the means of returning to an *autarkic* lifestyle, is impossible. For it is not that peace leads to autarkia, but rather that autarkia leads to peace. Perhaps, then, Dikaiopolis' "biggest pain by far" is not his fellow citizens' political apathy but rather their luxurious lifestyle. If Dikaiopolis is ever to achieve his goal of peace he must thus demonstrate to his fellow-citizens that an autarkic lifestyle is preferable - indeed that it is more enjoyable than the non-autarkic lifestyle because it does not entail the reality of warfare from which the "greatest disasters" arise.

Moving on, the Assembly eventually fills up with Athenian citizens, two Prytaneis, a herald and the archer-police.

Dikaiopolis: Well here are the Presidents – at noon! What did I tell you? It is just as I said: every man jostles for the front seats (40-42).

Herald: [*Addressing the attendees*] Move forward! Move, inside the sacred precinct with you!

Amphitheos: Has anybody spoken?

Herald: Who wishes to speak?

Amphitheos: Me!

Herald: Who are you?

Amphitheos: Amphitheos (Divine on Both Sides of the Family).

Herald: Not a human being?

Amphitheos: No. I'm immortal. For Amphitheos was son of Demeter and Triptolemus, and to him was born Celeus, and Celeus married Phaenarete my grandmother, of whom Lycinus was born, and being his son I'm immortal. To me have the gods commissioned the making of a treaty with the Lakedaimonians, and to me alone. But although immortal, gentlemen, I have no travel money. The Presidents wont provide it.

Herald: Police! (the archer-police seize Amphitheos and march him to the wings)

Amphitheos: Triptolemus and Celeus, will you look aside while I'm –¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Sommerstein translates this line as "Triptolemus and Celeus, will you ignore my plight? However, I am more inclined towards Henderson's translation "Triptolemus and Celeus, will you look aside while I'm –" because it conveys the sentence's incompleteness.

Dikaiopolis: Esteemed Prytaneis, you do injustice (*adikeite*) to the Assembly (*ekklesian*) by removing the gentleman who offered to make a treaty for us and let us hang up our shields!

Herald: Sit down and be quite!

Dikaiopolis: By Apollo, I most certainly will not, unless you call for a discussion about peace! (60)

We begin our analysis with Amphitheos' identity. Sommerstein calls the first half of the above-mentioned ancestry passage "pure invention" and the other half "pure confusion."¹¹⁰ In a similar manner Henderson dismisses Amphitheos' ancestry as "Mangled Eleusinian genealogy to be taken as preposterous, even deranged."¹¹¹ William Allan, adapts a less critical interpretation by arguing that Amphitheos is simply one of the many fictional deities invented by Aristophanes; itself a reflection of a broader mocking attitude in Old Comedy towards the onslaught of imported new cults and deities in contemporary Athens.¹¹² On the lighter side, Walcot suggests that Amphitheos' elaborate genealogy was also "a hit at Euripides and his fondness for such details" on Aristophanes' part.¹¹³

While there can be little doubt that Amphitheos is a fictional Aristophanic creature I would argue that Amphitheos' ancestry is carefully formulated and not a preposterous or deranged construction. Furthermore, I would argue that Amphitheos is created by

¹¹⁰ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 160.

¹¹¹ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 61, n. 10. The same author writes that the name "Amphitheos" is found only once in Attica, in a "list of members of a private cult of Heracles in Cydathenaeum, Aristophanes' deme."

¹¹² Allan, "Religious Syncretism: The New Gods of Greek Tragedy," 127.

¹¹³ Walcot, "Aristophanic and Other Audiences," 43.

Aristophanes not as a satirical commentary on Athenian religious trends (although this as well) but rather as an integral part of the play. Amphytheos' ancestry contributes further to the play's development and lends strength to its anti-war message. This argument can be supported by examining the original myth against Aristophanes' version.

According to the original myth, when the mourning Earth-Goddess, Demeter, was searching for her daughter, Persephone, she was welcomed to the house of Celeus, the King of Eleusis in Attica. In gratitude for his hospitality Demeter decided to teach Celeus' son, Triptolemus, the art of agriculture. It was from Triptolemus that the rest of Greece learned agriculture and, in particular, the cultivation of grain. While not of the same myth, it is worth noting that it was in Celeus' household that Iambe/Baubo managed to make Demeter laugh with her jokes and obscene gestures. Adding further to the intertwined symbolism, according to another version of the same myth, Demeter was the mother of an infant, Iacchus-Dionysus. Based on this myth Demeter's laughter was the result of watching Dionysus interact with his wet-nurse, Baubo.¹¹⁴

In Aristophanes' version of the same myth Amphytheos claims that he is the son of Demeter and Triptolemus (47-54). In other words, Aristophanes does not alter the original myth, but extrapolates on the original myth. Hence, according to Aristophanes' dramatic mythopoeia, upon reaching adulthood Triptolemus produces a son with Demeter. Keeping in mind that according to the ancient Athenian naming-custom the firstborn son was named after the paternal grandfather; naturally, Triptolemus' son was named after his grandfather, King Celeus the I; making Aristophanes' version a *continuation* myth.

¹¹⁴ That is, a hungry Dionysus pulling at Baubo's clothes while attempting to reach her breasts. For an in-depth analysis see Marcovich, "Demeter, Baubo, Iacchus, and a Redactor," *Vigiliae Christianae* 40/3 (1986): 294-301.

In terms of Celeus II's marriage to a woman named Phaenarete, one is forced to admit that we are on shaky grounds. The only woman having this rare name in Athens was Socrates' mother.¹¹⁵ Apart from that, there is a similarity between the name Phaenarete and Aristophanes' own name. For example, Phaenarete is a compound word consisting of the words *Phaen* (appears) and *arête* (virtue). Likewise, Aristophanes is a compound name consisting of the words *Aristos* (best), and *phanes* (appearing). That being said, one would be hard pressed to prove that Aristophanes was hinting at a symbolical relationship between Virtue-Appearing and Best-Appearing. In regards to Lycinus, Amphitheos' father, we have no information.

Despite our ignorance of Lycinus and Phaenarete, we have enough information to assert with a fair amount of certainty that Amphitheos is an Attic demi-god with strong roots in agriculture. With the exception of divine lineage and immortality, Amphitheos shares much in common with Dikaiopolis. Both hail from Attica, both have close ties to agriculture, and both aim for a peace treaty (Dikaiopolis because he wants to return to his agrarian lifestyle and Amphitheos because the gods command him). By the same token, Amphitheos establishes an unmistakable link between divine will and peace: Dikaiopolis no longer stands alone in his desires for peace since the Hellenic gods desire it as well.

At the political level, Aristophanes' depiction of an Assembly-rejected Amphitheos is nothing less than a grand metaphor for the rejection of Attic land by the Periclean war strategy. The Attic countryside, which had for countless centuries sustained its inhabitants, becomes the sacrificial lamb on the altar of war. By rejecting the descendant of Triptolemus, the man who taught Athenians how to cultivate grain, the

¹¹⁵ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 61, n. 10.

Athenian Assembly was thus implicitly rejecting an important part of Attica's traditional subsistence lifestyle. The historical consequences of that rejection would not be felt until 404, the year that Athens was forced to surrender due to lack of grain and an impending starvation.¹¹⁶

Hence, Dikaiopolis' exasperated comment that in his deme the "Buy Man" was never seen or heard (36) must be seen in conjunction with Amphytheos' rejection. Aristophanes could not have foreseen the grain-induced starvation of 404 BC. However, he did foresee that the Periclean strategy of abandoning the land, taking refuge inside the city walls, and relying on imported grains for survival was not feasible for a prolonged war. When the *Acharnians* was written in 425 BC it was painfully obvious that the war had already overextended its term. The death of Pericles, a pro-war moderate, had only made things worse. The pro-war radicals had risen to power and their optimistic forecasts were deterring the Assembly from pursuing peace talks.

Dikaiopolis' wholesome parody of the Persian Embassy, our next passage, seeks to dispel some of these optimistic forecasts. Prior to turning our attention to the Persians, however, something more can be said about Amphytheos and his claims that, although he is immortal, he does not have any travel money because the Presidents will not allow it (54). Approaching this passage from the perspective of political psychology, Leo Strauss writes that the "gods obviously wish the Athenians to show their earnest desire for peace (without such earnestness they do not deserve peace, or there will be no genuine peace)." The clearest proof, continues the same author, that men want something *sincerely* is if

¹¹⁶ The occasion for this was the defeat of the Athenian navy at the Battle of the Aegospotami. This, in turn, blocked the shipping route to the Black Sea from which Athens received her grain supply. On Athenian fear upon hearing of the defeat, see Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 2.2.1

they are prepared “to spend money on it.”¹¹⁷ The main culprit for this obvious lack of political will by the Assembly (fictional as well as historical), according to Aristophanes was optimism and unwarranted *overconfidence*. Once again, Dikaiopolis’ attempts to dispels this overconfidence and optimistic by exposing the Persian embassy (61-124) and the Thracian mercenaries (134-73).

Dikaiopolis’ reaction to the removal of Amphitheos is also interesting. Rather than addressing the Herald he addresses instead the Presidents; implying in the process that the Herald is irrelevant (or worse). “Esteemed Prytaneis,” announces Dikaiopolis, “you do injustice (*adikeite*) to the Assembly by removing the gentleman who offered to make (*poiēsai*) a treaty for us and let us hang up our shields! (56-8).” This is the first time that the word “injustice” (*adikeite*) appears in the play. When Dikaiopolis confronts the Assembly Presidents for their rejection of Amphitheos they remain silent. That silence becomes understandable when the Herald announces the arrival of the Persian embassy and the Thracian mercenaries. As we shall soon see, the Persians carried with them hopes of gold and the Thracians hopes of mercenaries. In turn, it was precisely the element of *hope*, that enabled the war party to repeatedly argue for the rejection of peace talks. Dikaiopolis’ claim that the Presidents were committing an injustice against the Assembly is in reality a veiled accusation that the Presidents were facilitating the continuation of war by hindering the efforts for peace.

¹¹⁷ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 58.

3.2 Overconfidence and War. The Persian Embassy: Lines 61-134

True to his word, that he will hackle anyone who is not congenial to peace talks

Dikaiopolis begins his heckling of the Persian Embassy.

Herald: The ambassadors back from the King! (61)

Dikaiopolis: The King indeed! I'm sick of ambassadors and their pea-cocks and their empty bragging (*alazoneumasin*).

Herald: Silence!

[*Two opulently dressed ambassadors enter by the parodos and mount the stage*]

Dikaiopolis: Wowie! Ecbatana, what a getup!

Ambassador: [*To the audience*] You send us to the Great King (*basilea ton mega*), on a salary of two drachmas per diem, when Euthymenes was archon (65).¹¹⁸

Dikaiopolis: Oh dear, the drachmas!

Ambassador: ---and we truly wore ourselves out a-wayfaring through Caÿstrian plains, under canopies, (70) reclining softly on litters, simply perishing!

Dikaiopolis: I must have on easy street, then---reclining in the garbage by the ramparts!

Ambassador: And when they regaled us they forced us to drink fine unmixed wine from goblets of crystal and gold.

Dikaiopolis: Ah, city of Cranaus! (75) Do you see how these ambassadors laugh (*katagelōn*) at you?

Ambassador: Barbarians, you see, recognize the real men only those who can gobble and guzzle the most.

Dikaiopolis: While with us its cock-suckers and arse-peddlers.

Ambassador: So, after three years we got to the royal palace, (80) but the King had gone off with an army to a latrine, and he stayed, and he stayed shitting for eight months upon the Golden Hills---

Dikaiopolis: And when was it he closed up his arsehole? At the full moon?

Ambassador: ---and then he departed for home. Then he threw us a party and served us whole ox en *casserole*--- (85)

Dikaiopolis: And who has ever seen ox casserole? What swaggering charlatanism! (*tōn alazoneumatōn*).

Ambassador: ---and, I swear by Zeus, he served us up a bird three times the size of Cleonymus;¹¹⁹ he called it a gull.

Dikaiopolis: That figures, since you were gulling us, drawing your two drachmas (90)

Ambassador: And now we're back, bringing Pseudo-Artabas, the King's Eye.

Dikaiopolis: May a crow peck it out, and yours too, the ambassador's!

¹¹⁸ In the year 437/6, or eleven years earlier.

¹¹⁹ A political crony of Cleon and apparently fat.

[*Pseudo-Artabas enters and mounts the stage. He has one huge eye in the center of his mask and a long scarf around his neck, and is attended by two Eunuchs*]

Dikaiopolis: Lord Heracles! Ye gods, fellow, you look like a man-o'-war in dangerous waters! Or are you rounding a point and looking for a berth? Is that a porthole-flap there under your eye?

Ambassador: Come then, tell the Athenians what the King send you to say, Pseudo-Artabas.

Pseudo-Artabas: Iarta name xarxana pisona satra (comic Persian).

Ambassador: You all understand what he says?

Dikaiopolis: By Apollo, I surely didn't.

Ambassador: He says the King is going to send you gold. [*To Pseudo-Artabas*] Speak louder and clearer about the gold.

Pseudo-Artabas: No gettum goldum, gapey-arse Ioni-o.

Dikaiopolis: I'll be damned, that's pretty clear!

Ambassador: Eh? What's he saying?

Dikaiopolis: Why, he says the Ionians have gaping arseholes if they're expecting any gold from the barbarians.

Ambassador: No, he says gobs of gold, no hassle.

Dikaiopolis: Gobs indeed! You are a giant phoney. Away with you; I'll do the questioning myself.

[*The Ambassadors exit; Dikaiopolis mounts the stage*]

Dikaiopolis: All right you, tell me plainly, in the face of this [*he brandishes his walking stick*], so I won't have to dye you Sardinian crimson: does the Great King intend to send us gold? Then we're simply being bamboozled by our ambassadors? These two men here have a distinctly Greek way of nodding; I'm convinced they hail from this very place! And one of the eunuchs, this one here, I recognize as Cleisthenes son of Sibyrtius! (sarcastic, topical joke). O shaver of a hot and horny arsehole,¹²⁰ with such a beard, you monkey, do you come before us appareled as a eunuch? And this one, who is he? Surely not Strato! (rumoured to be Cleisthenes' lover).

Herald: Sit down and be quite! The Council invites the King's Eye to the Prytaneum! (public-funded hall).

[*Pseudo-Artabas and Eunuchs exit*]

The above passage, like everything else in Aristophanic comedy, is not entirely fictional.

Thucydides describes the interception of a Spartan envoy to Persia in the winter of 425 that led them to send their own envoys to Persia to counteract the Spartan negotiations

¹²⁰ Parody of a Euripidean passage (Eur. Fr. 858) "O hot-desiring spirit (*splanhnon*) (Sommerstein, *Acharnians/Knights*, 162, n. 119).

(4.50.2).¹²¹ These early attempts by the Spartans to secure Persian gold reveals their realization that in order to defeat Athenian thalassocracy (rule of the sea) they needed money to build and maintain a strong navy. Indeed, it was Persian gold that built and maintained a Spartan navy that, under the leadership of a new breed of Spartans, the likes of Lysander, eventually defeated Athens.

Judging from the scatology of the above passage it would be safe to conclude that Dikaiopolis was not fond of any Persian collaboration and utilizes a number of comic methods to ridicule it. For example, he deliberately exaggerates the luxuries of the Persian ambassadorial missions. These exaggerations stand in contrast to the hardships suffered by ordinary Athenians. That being said, Aristophanes deliberately *understates* Athenian suffering. Considering Thucydides' vivid account of the cramped, unsanitary living conditions due to the deadly plague of 430 and its aftermath (2.17), Dikaiopolis' comment that he was reclining on top of garbage is tame at best. The fact that Aristophanes refrains from portraying the true extent of Athenian suffering is best understood by the concept of "dramatic distance". This, in turn, is best explained by Phrynichus' tragedy the *Capture of Miletus*. This play depicted the suffering of Miletians at the hands of the Persians. After watching this tragedy the Athenians became so upset, they banned the play and fined Phrynichus. According to Herodotus, the play reminded them of "their own suffering" at the hands of Persians (*Hist.* 6.12.2). As Rosenbloom correctly points out, Phrynichus failed to "distance the spectators" far enough from his

¹²¹ The intercepted passage read: "In regard to the Spartans the King did not know what they wanted.

Though many envoys had come to him, they did not say the same things" (Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 155).

tragedy to ensure the realization that “it was the “other” and not “one’s own” tragic pathos that the audience was seeing on the stage.¹²²

Unlike tragedy which relied on past mythical events for its plots, the plots of Old Comedy were situated in contemporary events. Thus, comic poets, like Aristophanes had to be more careful in the invocation of collective memories. This, I would argue, is why Aristophanes understates Athenian suffering in the *Acharnians*. In case of any lingering doubts, one should consider the dialogue between the magistrate and Lysistrata in the eponymous play. In response to her assertion, “We bear sons who go off to fight far away...” (589) (in obvious reference to the Sicilian massacre) the magistrate responds by saying: “Enough! Don’t open old wounds” (590).

Moving on, Aristophanes’ use of scatological language is a classic iambic signal of mistrust. The image of the Persian King leaving the Athenians waiting while he takes a lengthy visit to the latrine is akin to saying that the Great King is either “full of shit,” or the only thing that the Athenians will be receiving from him is only shit (or both). The figure of Pseudo-Artabas is likewise laden with ironic symbolism. He introduces himself as “Iarta name xarxana pisona satra”, a name suggesting an amalgamation of King Artaxerxes and Pissuthnes, the Sardinian satrap, whereby: Iarta (Arta) name xarxana (Xerxes) pisona (Pissuthnes) satra (Sardis).¹²³ Accordingly, Pseudo-Artabas is not an individual but a symbolic figure representing Persian kingship and Persian Satrapies. His one huge eye in the center of the mask implies a Cyclopean physiognomy. Likewise, Dikaiopolis’ utterance of “Lord Hercules!” (94) is best understood within the context of

¹²² Rosenbloom, *Myth, History and Hegemony in Aeschylus*, 101-2.

¹²³ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 69, n.19; Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 162, n. 100.

Hercules' own extraordinary size and power. By depicting Pseudo-Artabas as a Cyclop, namely, a man-eating creature, Aristophanes forges a symbolic image: a Cyclopean Persia seeking to devour Athens.

The utterance “*basilea ton mēgan*” (65) is made using tragic rather than comic diction. Despite, or because of this, the end result is comic exaggeration. Rather than invoking a sense of “shock and awe” in the audience, it leads to a deliberate diminution and trivialization of the “Great King.” Kenneth Dover is of the mind that this passage “exploits humourlessly the vast scale of the Persian Empire” and the stories “propagated by Herodotus.”¹²⁴ While this interpretation is valid it is also incomplete. Aristophanes' humorous exploitation of Herodotus' stories also mock and ridicule Persia.

Aristophanes' evident mistrust and hostility towards Persia is best understood from the historical perspective of the Persian Wars. The Persian Empire had attempted at two different occasions to invade Greece. However, despite Persia's immense power, a united Greece managed to limit Persia's westward expansion.¹²⁵

Future historical events proved that Aristophanes' mistrust of Persia was correct. For example, in 411, fourteen years after the *Acharnians*, an exiled Alcibiades sought

¹²⁴ Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 8, n. 1.

¹²⁵ When Persian forces invaded Greece in 490 they did so under the guidance of a disgruntled exiled Athenian despot, Hippias of the Peisistratid *genos* (clan). Rather than accepting various hospitality offers from Greek city-states Hippias opted instead for Persia in the hopes that they would restore him to power (Herodotus, *Histories*, 5.124; Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia*, 17.3). In the end, it was Hippias who guided Xerxes' forces onto Attic soil in 490. This is not to say that the Persians invaded Greece solely on Hippias' lobbying efforts, but it is to say that internal friction *inside* and *between* Greek city-states was exploited by Persian command.

refuge in the court of a Persian satrap, Tissaphernes (Pissuthnes' successor). Tissaphernes had already embarked in a series of machinations and double-games aimed at weakening Sparta and Athens alike (Thuc. 8.83-8.85). Far more ironic, however, were Alcibiades' own diplomatic games with Athens. Alcibiades misled the Athenians into believing that he had great influence over Tissaphernes, going so far as to claim that if Athens were to recall him, he would in turn persuade Tissaphernes to abandon his support for Sparta.¹²⁶ The readiness by which the Athenians believed Alcibiades (with the exception of Phrynichus), to repeat, speaks volumes about Athens unwarranted high hopes, which Aristophanes mocks so brutally in lines 61-124.

Chiasson argues that by including Pseudoartabas in the Persian embassy, Aristophanes had not "thought the matter through," that is, his main concern was to simply present a "comic version of the relations between Persian and Athenian ambassadors, the former ridiculous and unreliable, the latter selfish and either deceitful or incompetent (perhaps both)."¹²⁷ I beg to differ. While Aristophanes could not have foreseen Tissaphernes' future tactical plans, the inclusion of Pseudoartabas in the Persian embassy indicates a profound mistrust on Aristophanes' part, one that goes beyond mere "unreliability." Insofar as he is a Cyclopean amalgam of Persian monarchy and satrapy Pseudoartabas represents predatory intentions by a foreign power. In this sense, Pseudoartabas inclusion is central to Aristophanes' message.

Along the same lines, something needs to be added to Dover's argument that Aristophanes' intended message was that ambassadorial missions were "misdirected

¹²⁶ Marsh, "Alcibiades and the Persian Alliance," 13-4.

¹²⁷ Chiasson, "Pseudoartabas and His Eunuchs: Acharnians 91-122," 133.

waste of public money, profiting only those who were sent as ambassadors.”¹²⁸ During his confrontation with the Thracian mercenaries and later on with Lamachus (557-625), Dikaiopolis repeatedly raises the issue of war-related profitability. Otherwise put, Aristophanes accuses anyone and everyone who he perceives as an obstacle to peace, as a war-profiteer.

Despite his best efforts to unmask the Persian danger, Dikaiopolis fails since Pseudo-Artabas is invited to dine at the Prytaneum (124). This prompts Leo Strauss to argue that so “great was the Athenians’ addiction to the war that Dikaiopolis’ apparent unmasking of the Persian ambassadors is not even noticed by the Assembly.”¹²⁹ In other words, the majority of Athenians were suffering from a case of wilful blindness.

Following the exit of Pseudo-Artabas and his two eunuchs, an incensed Dikaiopolis abandons words in favour of action:

Dikaiopolis: Isn’t that a killer?¹³⁰ (125) I’m supposed to cool my heels here, while for their entertainment the door is never closed. No, I’m going to do a great and dire deed (*deinon ergon kai mega*). Where can I find Amphytheos?

[*Amphytheos enters from the wing*]

Amphytheos: Over here!

Dikaiopolis: Look, take these eight drachmas (130) and make a treaty (*spondas poiēsai*) with the Lakedaimonians for me alone and my children and the missus. [*Turning and*

¹²⁸ Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 78, n. 1.

¹²⁹ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 59.

¹³⁰ Sommerstein: “Doesn’t this make you want to hang yourself?, while also providing “isn’t this a hanging?”, as an alternative translation (*Acharnians*, 163, n. 125).

addressing the audience] “And you can carry on with your embassies and your gaping!”
(133) (*umeīs de presveuesthe kai kehēnate*)¹³¹
[*Amphitheos exits.*]

As for Dikaiopolis’ great (*mega*) and dire deed (*deinon ergon*), let us review the literature. I begin with the more critical commentaries. Kenneth Dover writes:

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Dikaiopolis does not concern himself even with the interests of his own city, let alone those of the Greek world; in this respect he is strikingly different from Trygaios in *Peace*. He wants his own comfort and pleasure, and escapes by magical means from his obligations as a citizen subject to the rule of the sovereign Assembly and its elected officers. It is not easy to read into his behaviour the implication that Athens would be a better and safer place if everyone else followed his example, for not only does he reject the idea of sharing the benefits of peace with anyone else, he operates on a supernatural level, exempt from the operation of real causes and effects, to which others cannot follow him simply by a wish or a decision to do so...In sum: *Acharnians* is not a pill of political advice thickly sugared with humour, but a fantasy of total selfishness...¹³²

Agnus Bowie, seconding Dover, goes on to argue that: “Leaving aside the fantasy element involved in such a treaty...one cannot deny that...the only person who benefits from all this is Dikaiopolis: the city as a whole benefits not at all. One cannot, therefore, argue that the play is simply a ‘plea for peace’...Aristophanes lays considerable emphasis on this selfish aspect of Dikaiopolis’ actions.”¹³³ Moreover, E. Bowie goes so far as to reject any etymological relationship between Dikaiopolis’ name and justice.

It was never very plausible that Dicaeopolis suggested ‘just city.’ The leading character may start off expostulating at the corruption of

¹³¹ Sommerstein interprets “*kehēnate*” as “gaping mouths,” however, Henderson’s interpretation of simple “gaping” is more apt because it captures the deliberate ambiguity of the passage.

¹³² Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 87-8.

¹³³ Bowie, “The Parabasis in Aristophanes: Prolegomena, *Acharnians*,” 38.

Athenian politics, but... once he has embarked on his private peace-project his interest in making Athens a just (or juster) *polis* evaporates. The alternative meaning 'he who treats his *polis* justly' is even less of a starter: many now agree that Dicaeopolis' implementation of his peace involves selfish *pleonexia*, almost a polar opposite of *dikaiosyne* in his dealing with his fellow citizens.¹³⁴

Douglas MacDowell, offers an apologetic commentary by arguing that it is only because Dikaiopolis fails to obtain a peace treaty for Athens that he "resorts to a private treaty for his own family. That is not a "selfish preference" he concludes, "it is merely the best he can manage."¹³⁵ Leaving the best interpretation for last, I cite Leo Strauss for whom:

His [Dikaiopolis] patience has now reached its limit. He decides on an enormous and grand deed. He pays Amphitheos the money required for the journey to Sparta and back out of his own pocket, so that the immortal citizen can bring a truce for him alone, i.e., for him, his wife, and his children. He knows that he acts according to the will of the gods and that peace is best for the city as a whole, i.e., that his action is just; the city that prefers war to peace is unjust. He must act for the good of the city against the will of the city. Yet, since he cannot force the city to make peace, the most he can do, in order to be just, is to make peace for himself alone. Amphitheos, who alone has been charged by the gods to make peace with Sparta, is to make that peace for Dikaiopolis alone...The superhuman and the private conspire against the city.¹³⁶

I would now like to offer my own interpretation. Dikaiopolis (Just Polis) a fictional character created by Aristophanes (Best-Appearing), pays the grandson of Phaenarete (Appearing-Virtue), to negotiate a peace-treaty so he can return to his self-sustainable lifestyle. Such a lifestyle, according to Plato's Socrates (Sure-Strength), son of Phaenarete (Appearing-Virtue), is just and peaceful (*Republic* 374a). Dikaiopolis then turns towards

¹³⁴ Bowie, "Who is Dicaeopolis," 184.

¹³⁵ MacDowell, "The Nature of Aristophanes' Akhamians," 148.

¹³⁶ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 59.

the theatre-audience and addresses them *as* an Assembly, that is to say, the theatrical audience are given the identity of political audience. By so doing, Dikaiopolis deliberately muddles theatrical and political boundaries.

Despite his discontent over his co-patriots' decision to reject negotiated peace talks, Dikaiopolis does not abandon Athens. Given the fact that there is often a generous amount of fantasy involved in Old Comedy, Dikaiopolis could have migrated to a far-away place. To be sure, that is exactly what another Aristophanic protagonist, Makedo, does in the comedy *The Birds*. After declaring that he is fed up with Athens, and through purely fantastical means, he establishes a new city in the clouds, "Cloud-cuckoo-town." Even when it becomes clear that he risks death at the hands of his fellow citizens by remaining in Athens (280), Dikaiopolis refuses to leave his birthplace. So why does Dikaiopolis decide to stay in Athens? I would argue that, Dikaiopolis stays in Athens for the same reason that Socrates stayed in the same polis: voluntary conformity and participation in a democratic polity.

In support of my argument I turn to Plato's *Crito*, a dialogue that deals with the topics of justice (*dike*), injustice (*adikia*) and a citizen's obligation to follow the laws. I also turn to Xenophon's *Hellenica*, where the actions of Socrates as an *Epistates* (Presiding Assembly President) during the trial of the Arginusae generals are described.¹³⁷ I begin my discussion with the latter. According to Xenophon, when Socrates found himself as the presiding Assembly President, he refused to allow a vote to take place in the Assembly that would have led to collective rather than individual

¹³⁷ An *Epistate* was elected from amongst the Assembly Presidents. Consequently, this was Socrates first and last political assignment.

verdicts. Socrates justified this action by claiming that he would do “nothing that was contrary to the law” (1.7.15). According to Xenophon, Socrates failed to persuade his angry fellow citizens. The ensuing majority vote led to a guilty verdict and a death sentence for all six generals.

During his own trial, Socrates failed once again to persuade the Assembly. Similar to the six generals he was also sentenced to death. However, when he was presented with the opportunity to escape, Socrates refused by invoking the “principle of gratitude” to convey his loyalty to the city’s Laws.¹³⁸ Roslyn Weiss perceptively interprets Socrates’ “gratitude principle” as the “persuade or obey” doctrine.¹³⁹ According to Richard Kraut this doctrine states that: “a citizen who does not obey must persuade in the good old-fashioned sense of the word: he must speak before a court and justify his disobedience.”¹⁴⁰

How does any of the above apply to Dikaiopolis?¹⁴¹ While Dikaiopolis does disobey the laws of the city (i.e., by negotiating a private peace treaty) this disobedience is in reality a rhetorical and dramatic ploy on the part of Aristophanes. Dikaiopolis’ disobedience is essential to the development of the play because it serves as a prerequisite

¹³⁸ Murphy, “Surrender of Judgement and the Consent Theory of Political Authority,” 117.

¹³⁹ Weiss, *Socrates Dissatisfied: An Analysis of Plato’s “Crito”*,” 162.

¹⁴⁰ Kraut, *Socrates and the State*, 75.

¹⁴¹ For those who would argue that this methodology is anachronistic because Plato wrote *after* Aristophanes, I would argue that Socrates taught *before* Aristophanes and therefore Aristophanes must have been thoroughly familiar with Socrates’ teachings. In addition, keeping in mind that Aristophanes plundered the intellectual labours of others (something that he mischievously admits in lines 410-89 (while in the process of ransacking Euripides’ tragedies)) it is quite possible that Aristophanes is roaming deep into Socratic territory in the *Acharnians*.

to Dikaiopolis' confrontation by his fellow citizens. When the Acharnian Chorus confronts him, this gives Dikaiopolis the perfect opportunity to justify his "disobedience." The very fact that Dikaiopolis places himself in the position of being forced to provide an exegesis to his fellow-citizens demonstrates that he adheres to the "gratitude principle." More than that, as Dikaiopolis goes about seeking to persuade his audience through the power of the logos, he adheres to the democratic principles of deliberation. Of course, part of his defence also involves the questioning of Athenian foreign policies, which, according to him, were the *casus belli* of the war. (In terms of rhetorical stratagem one could say that Dikaiopolis was using the "best defence is a good offence" approach).

Allowing for a small deviation from our subject, one cannot help but wonder why was it that Socrates lost his life, while Aristophanes/Dikaiopolis got to keep his? At the risk of doing an injustice to the complexity of the subject, it seems to me that Socrates ended up executed because he did not make use of all the rhetorical tricks that *he knew* persuasion entailed. Tricks such as begging and flattery; tricks, one may add, that Aristophanes/Dikaiopolis puts to full use during his own "defence" speech. This leads to the possibility that there is a grain of truth in Nietzsche's assertion that: "Socrates *wanted* to die; not Athens, but he himself chose the hemlock; he forced Athens to sentence him";¹⁴² being no longer desirous of life.

My suggestion, then, is that Aristophanes meant for the *Acharnians* to be a mirror of the Athenian Assembly. Insofar as this is the case, Aristophanes could not allow his protagonist to transgress the Laws of Athens - unless, of course, the Athenian Assembly itself transgresses the Laws. To be sure, Aristophanes shows the Athenian Assembly as

¹⁴² Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Problem of Socrates" §12.

transgressing an unwritten, fundamental and ancient Athenian law when they reject Amphytheos, the descendant of Triptolemus. At the symbolic level Amphytheos stood not only as the messenger of the Hellenic gods commanding the Athenians to pursue peace with their fellow-Hellenes, but he also stood for the Attic agricultural land that had sustained Attica for millennia.

Thus, it is not that Aristophanes uses democratic ideas to offer insights about comedy. Rather, he uses comedy to offer “insights and understanding on the actual operations of democracy.”¹⁴³ This is another reason why Aristophanes does not allow Dikaiopolis to abandon Athens. Aristophanes endows Dikaiopolis with the capability and confidence of a rhetorician by which to fight the rhetorical war and so persuade, “in the good old-fashioned sense,” the general populace.

¹⁴³ Combs and Nimmo, *The Comedy of Democracy*, 1996.

3.3 Self-Reliance During War: The Thracian Mercenaries: Lines 135-173

Dikaiopolis declaration that he was “giving-up” on his fellow-citizens (133) as a result of their political naivety proves to be a dramatic lie. As soon as Theoros enters the Assembly, followed by a troop of Thracian mercenaries, Dicaipolis begins anew his heckling and disruptive behaviour.

Herald: Let Theoros approach, back from the court of Sitacles (134)

Theoros: Present!

Dikaiopolis: Yet another phoney (*alazōn*) is announced.

Theoros: We wouldn't have stayed in Thrace so very long--

Dikaiopolis: Zeus no, if you hadn't been drawing hefty pay!

Theoros: - if the whole of Thrace hadn't been snowed in and the rivers frozen.

Dikaiopolis: About the same time Theognis was competing here!

Theoros: All the while I was drinking with Sitacles. He was exceedingly pro-Athenian (*filathinaios*), too, and your true lover (*erastes*). Why, he even wrote “Athenians are handsome” (*Athenaioi kaloi*) on the walls! And his son, whom we'd made an Athenian citizen, yearned to eat sausages at the Apaturia and kept begging his father to help his fatherland (*patrā*). And Sitacles poured a libation and swore he would help us by sending an army so large that the Athenians would say, “What a giant swarm of locusts heads our way!” (150)

Dikaiopolis: I'm dammed if I believe a word of what you've said here, except the part about the locusts! (152)

Theoros: And now he sends you the most bellicose (*mahimōtaton*) tribe in Thrace.

Dikaiopolis: Now that's clear enough, at last.

Herald: You Thracians that Theoros brought, come forward! (155)

[*The Soldiers enter*]

Dikaiopolis: What the hell is this? (*touti ti esti to kakon;*)

Theoros: An army of Odomantians.

Dikaiopolis: Odomantians indeed! Pray tell me the meaning of this! [*Exposing the soldiers stage phallos*]. Who's pruned the Odomantian's cocks? (*Odomanton to peos apotethriaken;*).

Theoros: Pay these fellows two drachmas and they'll swashbuckle all of Boetia. (160)¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Theoros' proposal to use the Thracians to harm Boetia (Athens' northern neighbour) reminds one of Pericles' own plans to harm Megara (Athens' southern neighbour).

Dikaiopolis: Two drachmas for these docked cocks (*apepsōlemenoīs*)! The crowd who row out ships and defend our city (*sōsipolis*) would sure yell about that!

[*The Odomantians rush Dikaiopolis and grab his wallet*]

Dikaiopolis: Hey, damn it! I'm getting killed! The Odomantians are plundering my garlic! Come on, drop that garlic!

Theoros: You troublemaker! (165) Don't approach them when they're garlic-primed (i.e., like fighting cocks).

Dikaiopolis: Presidents! Were you looking away as I was suffering this kind of treatment in my own country (*patridi*), and at the hands of barbarian men to boot? I insist that the Assembly table the question of pay for the Thracians, (170) and I declare to you that there is a sign from Zeus, and a raindrop has hit me!

Herald: The Thracians are excused and will return in two days' time. The Presidents declare the Assembly adjourned (173).

[*All exit except Dikaiopolis*]

A number of topical and historical explanatory points need to be said. Theorus was said to be a political crony and flatterer of Cleon and is attacked by Aristophanes in his early comedies.¹⁴⁵ Sitalces was an Athenian ally who had helped Athens during an abortive invasion of Macedonia four years earlier (Thuc. 2.95-101). Therefore, Aristophanes' depiction of the Thracians (similar to the Persians) is based on historical facts.¹⁴⁶ Theognis, if we recall from the opening lines (11), was a tragic poet who was notorious for his frigid writing style and was popularly nicknamed "Snow".

¹⁴⁵ Reference for this entire paragraph are from Sommerstein's commentary (*Acharnians* 164-5) unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁴⁶ Thucydides' passage describing the "Thracian connection" betrays an optimistic tone on the part of Athens. It reads: "During the same summer Nymphodorus, son of Pythes, an Abderite, whose sister Sitalces had married, was made their proxenus by the Athenians and sent for to Athens. They had hitherto considered him their enemy; but he had great influence with Sitalces, and they wished this prince to become their ally.... Sitalces.... was now sought as an ally by the Athenians, who desired his aid in the reduction of the Thracian towns and of Perdiccas. Coming to Athens, Nymphodorus concluded the alliance with Sitalces and made his son Sadocus an Athenian citizen, and promised to finish the war in Thrace by persuading Sitalces to send the Athenians a force of Thracian[s]" (2.29).

According to Henderson, Theoros' claim that Sitacles was a philoathenian and a true lover of Athens is laden with meaning.¹⁴⁷ It recalls, and takes literally, Pericles' famous erotic exhortation at the Funeral Oration that Athenian men should become lovers of Athens, *erastas gignomenous autēs* (Thuc. 2.43). Theoros' next claim that Sitacles wrote, "Athenians are handsome" (*Athenaioi kaloi*) on the walls is a comic reference to the common practice of graffiti inscriptions used by lovers during the courtship of boys.¹⁴⁸ Theoros also uses the rare "high-flown" poetic *patrā* (fatherland) rather than the normal *patris* to describe the patriotism felt by Sitacles' son towards his adoptive country,¹⁴⁹ thereby sarcastically exaggerating the Thracians' supposed philo-Athenian sentiments.

Theoros' allusions to Thracian melodramatic romanticism stand in sharp contrast to Thracian actions. Rather than acting like gentle, wooing lovers, the Thracians act in the manner of aggressive plunderers. It would seem that Aristophanes constructs a dramatically incongruous (and thereby comic) image whereby words do not match actions; (i.e., the ensuing dramatic symbolism is that of violent rapists, not chivalrous lovers). Considering the fact that the Thracians were known for their ferocity, Dikaiopolis manipulates this popular prejudice. Whereas Theoros suggests that the Thracian ferocity would be beneficial to Athenians, Dikaiopolis suggests it would be detrimental. In comparison to the Persians, which are shown contributing nothing to Athens, the Thracians are shown engaging in plunder and violence.

¹⁴⁷ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 75, n. 24.

¹⁴⁸ A view held by Henderson (p.77, n. 25) although Sommerstein (p. 164, n. 144) cites both boys *and* girls as the recipients of such amorous messages.

¹⁴⁹ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 164, n. 147.

Similar to the Persians, the Thracians are depicted as “Others,” a concept best understood in terms of “alterity”, a word which is derived from the German “alter” or “other.” To be sure, the antithesis between Hellene and barbarian was not Aristophanes’ own creation but rather a well-established social prejudice (for a lack of a better word). In ancient Greece the “out” group were the Barbarians and included everybody that was not a Hellene. These two terms of opposition, Hellenes and Barbarians, were not only mutually exclusive but also jointly exhaustive, since all humans were either Hellenes or Barbarians.¹⁵⁰

In the specific case of the Odomantians, Dikaiopolis’ remark “two drachmas for these docked cocks?” is derogatory with or without his prior comment of “who pruned the Odomantians’ cocks?” No doubt these lines evoked plenty of laughter from the children in the audience suggesting, that Aristophanes was not beyond using iambic tricks.¹⁵¹ Henderson is of the opinion that the Greeks, in contrast to barbarians, did not practice circumcision but that the Odomantians (despite being barbarians) did not practice circumcision either. This, leads Henderson to conclude that “since actual Odomantians were also uncircumcised Dikaiopolis here exposes Theorus’ troops as barbaric (and therefore cowardly) impostors.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ According to Cartledge, this ancient polarity is similar to the more recent polarity of “Jew” and “gentile”, another contradistinction which according to the same author “encapsulates alterity in the fullest sense” (*The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others*, 2).

¹⁵¹ In the *Clouds*, the Chorus Leader (aka Aristophanes) claims that his comedy [*Clouds*] is a *decent* comedy because she does not present herself to the audience “with any dangling leather stitched to her, red at the tip and thick (i.e., phallos) to make the children laugh (538-539).

¹⁵² Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 78, n. 30.

What can one say in Aristophanes' defence? Keeping in mind that the Peloponnesian War was to a certain extent a "civil war", the use of Persians and Thracians as "Others" seems to be a rhetorical ploy, seeking to remind the Athenians that although they were Ionians and the Spartans were Dorians, both were Hellenes. In the *Peace* (421) performed at the City Dionysia, Trygaios (Vine-Harvester) attempts (similar to Dikaiopolis) to highlight the common Hellenic identity by creating a polarity with non-Hellenes.

Trygaios: And I'm going to tell you something terribly important, (*deinon kai mega*)¹⁵³ something that's being plotted against the gods.

Hermes: By all means speak up; perhaps you'll convince me (405).

Trygaios: Well, the Moon and that all-cunning (*panourgos*)¹⁵⁴ Sun have been plotting against you for some time now and mean to betray Hellas to the barbarians.

Hermes: What do they hope to accomplish by that?

Trygaios: Simple: we sacrifice to you and the barbarians sacrifice to them; so naturally they'd want us all annihilated, so they could take over the rites to the gods themselves.

Hermes: So, that's why they've been clipping days and taking bites out of the year: pure chicanery (i.e., referring to calendrical tabulations) (415).

Trygaios: Yes by Zeus! And so, my dear Hermes, lend us an eager hand, and help us pull her out [Peace] and in your honour we'll celebrate the Great Panathenaea... (417)

¹⁵³ Recall Dikaiopolis' use of the identical words, *deinon ergon* (work) *kai mega*, when he decides to undertake a private peace (127-128).

¹⁵⁴ Henderson in his translation of *Peace* translates *panourgos* as "nefarious" (481) a somewhat misleading term since it is indicative of vileness and cruelty. All-Cunning, seems to me, to be a more suitable term for *panourgos* for a number of reasons. To begin, the epithet *panourgos* was often used in reference to Odysseus (a figure renewed for his cunning) and Hermes, the patron-god of thieves and liars. Incidentally, there is a certain rhetorical mischievousness on the part of Trygaios for referring to the Sun-God with an epithet reserved for Hermes while speaking to Hermes. On another note, Rabelais' trickster character Panurge is the "reviver of the spirit" of Hermes the *Panourgos* (on the parallelism of Panurge-Hermes see Ludwig Schrader, *Panurge und Hermes, zum Ursprung Eines Charakters bei Rabelais*. Bonn: Romanisches Seminar der Universität Bonn, 1958).

This humorous exploitation of alterity seeks to bolster anti-war sentiments by warning that the Peloponnesian War would weaken Hellas against external enemies. In the event of lingering doubt, Trygaios reverts to quoting Homer's *Iliad* on the evils of civil war, "But here's something the sage (*sophos*) Homer said, that by Zeus is well put (*dexion*): "Clanless, lawless, heartless is that man who lusts for the horror of warfare among his own people" (*Peace* 1096-98).

Not without significance is Dikaiopolis' indignation regarding the pay of the mercenaries. Theoros' proposal of two drachmas per day is shown to be double that of Athenian sailors, and while the barbarians are shown to be a liability to the polis the sailors are declared to be saviours (*sōsi-polis*). In addition, Dikaiopolis' indignant cry, "Two drachmas for these docked cocks (*apepsōlemenois*)!" (161) revolves not only around the issue of money but also on the issue of somatic attributes. *Apepsōlemenois* hints of a diminished/shrunken size with the implication being that these men, on account of their circumcision, were somehow "less than" their original nature. While no direct comparison is made with the uncircumcised Athenian sailors, that comparison is nevertheless implied; double the money for half "penised" warriors. Hence, Dikaiopolis not only appeals to Athenian financial envy but in this case he is also appealing to the Athenian male ego. A male ego, one adds, that is enlarged by negative comparison.

Moving on, something should be said about the garlic-stealing incident. Admittedly, there is something inherently comic in watching some ferocious warriors stealing garlic from a helpless old man. Despite, or perhaps because of the victim's indignant comic cries, there is a certain pleasure in witnessing this spectacle the same way that there is a certain pleasure in listening to Aesopic fables. The fables of Aesop were didactic tales that contain both an *endomythium* (inside the myth) and an

epimythium (after-the myth) message.¹⁵⁵ If a similar structure were assigned to Aristophanes' garlic-stealing scene, the story's *epimythium*,¹⁵⁶ would have been something along the lines of a statement made by Machiavelli that mercenary armies are dangerous "without discipline, unfaithful, valiant before friends, cowardly before enemies... destruction is deferred only so long as the attack is... in peace one is robbed by them."¹⁵⁷

In terms of historical significance, I would argue that Aristophanes' hostility, is related to Sitacles' complicit involvement in the killing of the Peloponnesian envoys in 431. According to Thucydides, when two Athenian envoys found themselves at the court of Sitacles the same time as five Peloponnesian envoys, the Athenians persuaded Sitacles to arrest and send the Peloponnesian envoys to Athens. "On the very day of their arrival," the Athenians "put them all to death without trial and without hearing what they wanted to say" before throwing their bodies in a pit (2.67). Historian Donald Kagan, suggests that the perpetrators were radicals from the war party and that this atrocity was a deliberate act to derail any possible peace talks. While we have no evidence that Theoros, a political crony of Cleon, was involved in this affair, nonetheless, Aristophanes implies a friendly relationship between the radicals of his time (i.e., Cleon) and Thracian leadership.

From this perspective, the Odomantian's comic act of stealing Dikaiopolis' garlic inside the Assembly takes on a more grave light. Dikaiopolis' indignant cry: "Presidents! Were you looking away as I was suffering this kind of treatment in my own country, and at the hands of barbarian men to boot? (170)" is not so much a criticism of the Thracians

¹⁵⁵ Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables*, xii.

¹⁵⁶ Or *ethymene*, to use Aristotle's term (*Rhetoric* 20).

¹⁵⁷ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, XII.

as it is a veiled criticism of the Athenian Assembly. Their utter failure to follow their laws led to one of the first transgressions of *jus in bello*. The failure by the Assembly Presidents to call a meeting or a trial for the Peloponnesian prisoners was an example of deliberate inaction; they were “looking away” as Dikaiopolis aptly puts it. Dikaiopolis’ subsequent assertion “...at the hands of barbarian men” (170) is also an Athenian self-condemnation because the barbarians were not the ones that did not obey the Athenian laws, rather, it was the Athenians. In this sense, the Athenians acted more “barbaric” than the “barbarians.”

While not directly related to discussion, it is of interest to note that Thucydides’ account detailing Thracian atrocities in Boetia draws some of its inspiration (or so I would argue) from lines 134-73 of the *Acharnians*. After arriving too late for the ships departing for the Sicilian expedition, close to 1,300 Thracian mercenaries of the Dian tribe were ordered back home. However, rather than telling 1,300 “garlic-primed” Thracian warriors that they were going home empty-handed (especially after the Athenian sailors had departed for Sicily leaving Athens vulnerable) the Assembly ordered the Thracians to return to their homeland via Boetia and gave them permission to pillage inside enemy territory as they saw fit (Thuc. 7.29.2). Thus, under an Athenian escort the Thracians peltasts¹⁵⁸ pillaged Tanagra before attacking Mycalessus where they indiscriminately killed men, women, and domesticated animals. “The Thracians,” Thucydides writes, “even fell upon a boys school, the largest in the place, which the children had just entered, and cut-down every one (7.29). Thucydides ends his narrative

¹⁵⁸ Light infantrymen armed with a shield (*pelte*), two to three javelins and a short knife.

with the remark, “the Thracians, when they dare, can be as bloody as the worst barbarians (*omoīa toīs malista toū barbarikoū, en ō an tharsese, fonikōtaton estin*) (7.30.4).¹⁵⁹

Thucydides’ judgmental remark, which is noteworthy considering the fact that he appears to have had Thracian ancestry,¹⁶⁰ is not reserved only for the Thracians. According to Gerald Mara, Thucydides’ decision to mention *only* the education of the boys as the Mycallestians’ sole collective action was a deliberate act. It meant to draw attention to Pericles’ utterances in the Funeral Oration (2.41) that Athens would be remembered by future generations for their eternal memorials of their friendship (*k’agathon*) and of their enmity (*kakon*), and that Athens was “the school of Hellas.” The resulting image, claims Mara, effectively challenges the Periclean image of Athenian culture and activity because it was not “simply that Athens’ impressive cultural identity” failed to prevent its “involvement with barbarian bloodthirstiness;” certain aspects of that identity exacerbated Athenian responsibility. While this author stops short from claiming that Thucydides sought the deconstruction of Athens’ self-understanding, he does claim instead that Thucydides was expressing in the “strongest narrative and rhetorical terms....

¹⁵⁹ A rather problematic translation by Benjamin Jowett (1900) although it should be said that Thucydides is a notoriously difficult author. Thomas Hobbes (1839) translates the same line as: “For the nation of the Thracians, where they dare, are extreme bloody, equal to any of the barbarians.” Dutton (1910) and Crawley (1952) alike offer: “the Thracian race, like the bloodiest of the barbarians, being even more so when it has nothing to fear.” While Lattimore’s translation (1998) reads: “For the race of Thracians, like the most extreme barbarians, is most bloodthirsty when emboldened.”

¹⁶⁰ Thucydides’ father was named Olorus, a rare name that was shared by Miltiades’ father-in-law, the Thracian King Olorus. This, in addition to the fact that Thucydides owned gold mines in Thrace, has led some scholars to argue that Thucydides had blood-ties to Thracian royalty (Packard, “On Some Points in the Life of Thucydides,” 54-6).

the need to be attentive to the darkness that may lurk within even the seemingly most enlightened culture.”¹⁶¹ It is in terms of this “Periclean” image, I would argue, that Thucydides’ narrative of Thracian brutality under Athenian stewardship takes its inspiration from Aristophanes’ own narrative of Thracian brutality under Athenian stewardship (i.e., Theoros).

A word about Dikaiopolis’ comico-religious statement: “I insist that the Assembly table the question of pay for the Thracians, and I declare to you that there is a sign from Zeus, and a raindrop has hit me!” (170-171). We know that natural phenomena such as earthquakes, moon and sun eclipses, were taken as signs of divine will. For the most part such omens were interpreted as expressing a negative divine disposition for matters at hand. Thus, according to Dikaiopolis’ omen, Zeus is dissatisfied with the pay of the Thracian mercenaries. However, the same omen takes on a comic twist (via the technique of deliberative diminution) when we are told that Zeus displayed his displeasure not with mighty thunder or lightning but with a single raindrop! Aristophanes’ parody runs deep. At one level Aristophanes mocks the established, widely practiced religious tradition of interpreting natural phenomena as divine communication media. Aristophanes also exposes and mocks the relativism of politically motivated interpretations. For example, if one speaker can use a natural phenomenon to advance a peace agenda, another speaker can just as easily use the same phenomenon to support a war agenda. In other words, omens become the easiest means for the support of political aims.

¹⁶¹ Mara, “Democratic Self-Criticism and the Other in Classical Political Theory,” 747.

While Dikaiopolis uses the omen of a raindrop in the pursuit of a just action, for a “city that prefers war to peace is unjust,”¹⁶² this by no means guarantees a positive correlation between Zeus and justice. Aristophanes’ Socrates in the *Clouds* goes as far as to argue that, contrary to Strepsiades’ belief, rain is not Zeus pissing in a sieve but rather the work of the clouds. In regards to lighting, (Zeus’ favourite meteorological weapon) the argument is that it exists independent of moral considerations.

Strepsiades:... Its quite obvious that Zeus hurls it at the perjurers.

Socrates: How’s that, you moron...If he really strikes perjurers, then why hasn’t he burned up Simon, Cleonymus and Theoros¹⁶³ since they’re paramount perjurers? On the other hand, he strikes his own temple, and Sunium, headland of Athens, and the great oaks. An oak tree certainly doesn’t perjure itself! (*Clouds* 402).

The point of the above is that Aristophanes seems to be using religion as another rhetorical trick in his anti-war rhetoric.

In the wider context of peace-negotiations, the element of overconfidence is a serious obstacle to peace talks. Dominic Johnson argues that overconfidence is a human tendency that more often than not leads political leaders into war, when more realistic assessments would encourage maintaining a peaceful status quo.¹⁶⁴ By attempting to discredit the prospects of Persian gold and Thracian mercenaries, Aristophanes is to a large extent attempting to discredit the positive illusion that the Athenians had about the war’s outcome. This is not to say that the Athenians held out on peace-talks because they were confident of Persian or Thracian help, far from it. However, the Athenians did hold

¹⁶² Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 59.

¹⁶³ This is the same Theoros that we encounter in the *Acharnians*.

¹⁶⁴ Johnson, *Overconfidence and War*, 35-8.

out on peace talks, because they were confident of victory, something, which in turn blinded them to the uncertainty of war.

3.4 A Just Treason? The Making of a Private Peace: Lines 174-202

Dikaiopolis' success with the Thracians, in contrast to his failure with the Persians, leads Leo Strauss to comment that "fraud cannot be fought by truth, but only by fraud."¹⁶⁵ Be that as it may, the Assembly is barely adjourned when Amphitheos returns from his mission.

Herald: The Thracians are excused and will return in two days' time. The Presidents declare the Assembly adjourned (173).

[*All exit except Dikaiopolis*].

Dikaiopolis: Damn it all, what a good salad I've lost.

[*Amphitheos enters on the run carrying three wineskins*]

Dikaiopolis: But here comes Amphitheos, back from Lacedaimonon! Welcome Amphitheos! (174)

Amphitheos: No welcome yet, not till I've stopped running! I've got to run till I outrun the Acharnians!

Dikaiopolis: What's up?

Amphitheos: I was hurrying back here with some treaties for you when some elders of Acharnae got wind of them, tough as hardwood, stubborn Marathon-fighters, men of maple. Then they all started yelling, "Traitor! (*ō miarōtate*) Are you bringing treaties (*spondas*) when our vines are slashed?" And they began to fill their cloaks with stones. I ran away; they kept chasing me and shouting.

Dikaiopolis: Well, let them shout. Do you bring the treaties?

Amphitheos: Yes, indeed, I've three samples for sipping. This one's a five-year treaty. Have a sip.

Dikaiopolis: Yuk! (*aiboī*)

Amphitheos: What the matter?

Dikaiopolis: I don't like this one; it stinks of pitch and battleship construction.

Amphitheos: Well then, here's a ten-year treaty for you to sip.

Dikaiopolis: This one stinks too, of embassies to the allies, a sour smell, like someone being bullied.

Amphitheos: Well, this one's a thirty-year treaty by land and sea.

Dikaiopolis: Holy Dionysia! This treaty smells of nectar and ambrosia and never waiting to hear "time for three days' rations," and it says to my palate, "go wherever you like." I accept it; I pour it in libation; I drink it off! And I tell the Acharnians to go to hell!

Amphitheos: As for me, I'll be getting clear of the Acharnians!

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

[*Amphitheos runs off*]

Dikaiopolis: And as for me, free now of war and hardships, I'm going home to celebrate the Rural Dionysia! (202).

It should be said that the lightning speed by which Amphitheos travels to Sparta, negotiates a peace treaty, and returns to Athens (measured in mere minutes) is not a time-related absurdity, nor is it an indication that Aristophanes never meant this play to be taken seriously (as some scholars have argued). However, the topic that deserves our attention is not the temporal issue but rather the very idea of a private peace treaty. While we saw Amphitheos departing for Sparta in order to negotiate a private peace treaty on Dikaiopolis' behalf (133) we had no way of knowing about the potential success of his journey until now. The Spartans could very well have refused Amphitheos by stating that peace treaties are only possible between governments since after all it is only governments that make wars and not individuals. Of course, individuals in their capacity as kings or despots *are* capable of declaring wars with little or no governmental consultation.¹⁶⁶ However, this was not the case with the Peloponnesian War; Athens needed the approval of the Assembly and Sparta needed the approval of the Apella before declaring a war.

The wrath of the Acharnian Chorus is, to a certain degree, the wrath of the Athenian Democratic Constitution. In particular, it is the wrath of a post-Cleisthenic

¹⁶⁶ Ronald Reagan ordered the invasion of Granada in 1983 without consulting the Congress, thereby rendering the war declaration (implied by the invasion) as that of a man and not that of the government (See: Center for Constitutional Rights, "Conyers v. Reagan" <http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/past-cases/conyers-v.-reagan>). Ironically, it was the same American president who declared that "People do not do. make wars; governments do" ("Address at Moscow State University", May 31, 1988, http://reagan2020.us/speeches/moscow_commencement.asp).

Athenian Democratic Constitution that prohibited one-man rule. For instance, the Acharnians' cry, "Are you bringing treaties when our vines are slashed?"(183) cannot be taken as their sole reason for opposing the private peace-treaty. After all Dikaiopolis, similar to the Acharnian Chorus, is a non-urbanite, and asserts that his vines were also cut-down by invading Spartans (512). Amphytheos' characterization of the Acharnian Chorus as *Marathonomahoi* is another indication that their role and function transcends that of simple farmers in this eponymous play. Of course the Acharnian Chorus that was pursuing Amphytheos were not real Marathon-veterans (had they been they would have been between 82 to 120 years of age in 425 BC). Rather, the term *Marathonomahoi* is indicative of character. Sommerstein views these Marathon-fighters as representative of an older, tougher generation,¹⁶⁷ and Henderson as the generation that had "repulsed the Persians, established the democracy, and acquired the empire."¹⁶⁸ The *Marathonomahoi* were the men who repelled the Persians in 490, including the satrap Artaphernes in whose court the exiled tyrant Hippias had fled following his overthrow by Cleisthenes in 510 BC. The ascent of Cleisthenes to power was marked by constitutional reforms including the division of Athens into ten tribes according to one's deme;¹⁶⁹ a strategic formation meant to undermine the power of the aristocracy. Cleisthenes termed his reforms *isonomia*, equality-before-the-law, and those reforms cultivated the ground for the eventual emergence of democracy.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 166, n. 180.

¹⁶⁸ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 81, n. 33.

¹⁶⁹ Bradeen, "The Trittyes in Cleisthenes' Reforms," 22.

¹⁷⁰ Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato*, 1996.

Referring to the Acharnian Chorus as *Marathonomahoi*, I would argue, was a calculated move on Aristophanes' part. The *Marathonomahoi* were not only hostile to despotic regimes, they were foremost the forefathers of democracy. They had amicable relations with other Greek city-states and saw themselves as the defenders of Ionian city-states against the Persian Empire. In other words, the *Marathonomahoi* embodied an older, pre-imperial Athens that did not exploit fellow Greek city-states that she had sworn to protect and did not collaborate with non-Greeks to harm fellow Greeks. By calling the Acharnian Chorus *Marathonomahoi* Aristophanes thus seeks to "remind" his audience (which no doubt included many Acharnian men) of Athens' original ethos and political morality.

The same term, it would seem to me, is also meant to be a gentle trigger for the same audience to critically re-evaluate the objectives of the Peloponnesian War, especially in comparison to the Persian Wars. For example, if the "real" *Marathonomahoi* fought in order to protect themselves and their fellow Greek city-states from the invading Persians, what were the Athenian men fighting for? The survival of a tyrannical Athenian empire? (As we shall soon see, Dikaiopolis' use of this term takes on added significance when he implies that the Acharnian men have been misled by the rhetoric of the pro-war politicians).

The Acharnian Chorus argues that they were fighting to avenge the destruction of their vineyards (183-5), in other words, they were defending their territorial integrity. During his defence speech, Dikaiopolis does not dispute this claim, but he does question why Attica was being attacked. By claiming that Sparta invaded Attica as a result of Athens' refusal to rescind her imperialistic policies, Dikaiopolis' claim, coupled with the

theme of the *Babylonians* (i.e., Demos treating Athenian allies like slaves), problematizes the self-righteous anger displayed by the Acharnian Chorus.

Not without significance are the various epithets Amphitheos uses to describe the Acharnian Chorus to Dikaiopolis. Amphitheos calls them *presbytai* (elders) (180) and also describes them as *stipptoi gerōntes* (sturdy geezers or tough old folk), *prininoi* (holm-oaks); *ateramones* (stubborn or unyielding), *sfedamninoi* (men of maple); all of which are indicative of toughness.¹⁷¹ At the same time the above are also indicative of the fighting nature of the Acharnian men, for the same men had a reputation of being the toughest and most formidable of Attic hoplites.

Amphitheos' admiring and respectful characterization of the Acharnian Chorus as tough *Marathonmahoi*, when combined with the message of the *Babylonians* and Dikaiopolis' subsequent defence speech, could only produce the following Aristophanic message to his Acharnian audience: "Similar to your ancestors, the *Marathonmahoi*, you are tough, however, unlike them, you are fighting for different principles. Whereas your ancestors fought with other Greeks against a despotic Persia, you are now fighting against other Greeks for a despotic Athens. To redeem yourselves and stand once more worthy of being called *Marathonmahoi*, you must reject the war and embrace negotiated peace talks." As we shall see, this is exactly how Aristophanes "allows" the Acharnian Chorus to redeem themselves in this play.

¹⁷¹ Holm-oaks and maple trees were considered by the ancient Greeks to be the toughest types of wood. The same epithets also pun upon the main industry of Acharnae, coal production (see Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 166, n. 180).

Despite the fact that Amphitheos has a divine genealogy this does not absolve him from what the Acharnian Chorus perceive as a sacrilegious crime, as evident by their use of the term *miarōtate* (183). Henderson and Sommerstein translate *ō miarōtate* as “traitor” and “villain” respectively. By so doing, however, both authors understate the religious overtones of this word. *Miarōtate* is related to *miainein*, to pollute, and *miarōtate* invokes the image of someone who is entirely polluted, a term perhaps best befitting Orestes following his mother’s murder. Just as the tyrant-slayers, Harmodios and Aristogeiton, were elevated from human to divine status by the *Marathonomahoi* for destroying the principle of one-man rule at Athens in the 5th century, Amphitheos is debased from his divine status for entering into secret negotiations with another city-state during wartime.

The task of explaining this democratic transgression will be left to Dikaiopolis since Amphitheos does not offer a defence on his own behalf. Rather, he runs quickly from fear and “his speed is equal to his fear.”¹⁷² Amphitheos, Strauss writes, “performed his mission with the speed of an immortal. Dispatch and secrecy are indispensable for the success of treason, as Machiavelli would say.”¹⁷³ Strauss’ characterization of Amphitheos’ action as “treacherous” is significant in comparison to his earlier statements declaring the justice of a peace-loving state and the injustice of a war-loving state. Does this mean that Strauss is contradicting himself? Not if we see Strauss’ comment as reinforcing the argument that Amphitheos’ action, while just and divinely-sponsored, nonetheless constitutes treason from the perspective of a democratic government.

¹⁷² Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 60.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 59.

Dikaiopolis' reply to the frightened Amphitheos: "Well, let them shout" (186) is insensitive. He fails to empathize with Amphitheos because he is not experiencing the same fear that Amphitheos is experiencing. Later in the play, when Dikaiopolis does experience the same fear as Amphitheos (namely, when he finds himself the target of the Acharnians' hostility (320-324)), we notice a discernable change in his reaction. Consequently, the issue of empathy is a running theme in the play.

Next, Dikaiopolis turns his attention to the peace treaty. He asks Amphitheos: "Did you bring the peace treaties?" (186). By using a plural form (treaties as opposed to treaty), Dikaiopolis is excluding the possibility of a singular Kantian *perpetual* peace. Amphitheos responds by affirming Dikaiopolis' presupposition, "Yes indeed, I've three samples for sipping" (186). Needless to say Aristophanes is having fun with the paronomasia between peace treaty (*spondas*) and wine libations (*spondai*), two homographic words. The first peace treaty is a five-year old wine to which Dikaiopolis expresses disgust, "Yuk! (*aiboī*)" he exclaims "I don't like this one; it oozes pitch and battleship construction" (190). In other words, for Dikaiopolis the five-year peace treaty is not a "peace treaty" *per se* but rather a temporary suspension of war.

The ten-year treaty is likewise rejected by Dikaiopolis on the grounds that it oozes ally-intimidation (*diatrivēs tōn ximmaxōon*). Sommerstein juxtaposes the word *diatrivē* (grinding-down) to the one found in Thucydides (8.87.4) and correctly points out that what Aristophanes is alluding to with the word "*diatrivē*" was the despatch of "admonitory embassies" to discourage defections from the Delian alliance.¹⁷⁴ Brett Leeds,

¹⁷⁴ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 166, n. 193.

“Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties,” discusses the subject of alliance deflections at length. According to this author, alliance violations are best understood by two variables: 1) costs associated with violating an alliance, and 2) changes occurring *after* an alliance is formed (p.801). In the case of the original Delian Alliance, Thucydides provides ample testimony that with the passing of time the alliance became increasingly oppressive. The Peloponnesian War made matters worse because the Athenians began demanding much-needed resources for the continuation of that war. He writes:

The causes which led to the defections of the allies were of different kinds, the principal being their neglect to pay the tribute or to furnish ships, and, in some cases, failure of military service. For the Athenians were exacting and oppressive, using coercive measures towards men who were neither willing nor accustomed to work hard. And for various reasons they soon began to prove less agreeable leaders than at first (Thuc. 1.99).

Invariably, the above created a direct relationship. The longer the war lasted the more demanding Athens became, the more demanding Athens became the more rebellious her allies became. This brings us back to Aristophanes’ lost comedy *Babylonians*, where a cruel master named Dēmos is portrayed as lording it over the mill-working, branded slaves (i.e., allied city-states).¹⁷⁵

It is this cynical portrayal of Athens that prevents me from agreeing with Sommerstein’s subsequent suggestion that Aristophanes saw durable peace as “the best way to keep the empire safe for the Athenians and tolerable for their subjects.”¹⁷⁶ We

¹⁷⁵ Murray, *Aristophanes*, 25.

¹⁷⁶ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 166, n. 193.

have no evidence that Aristophanes advocated the existence of an Athenian empire to begin with, much less its continuation.

Be that as it may, what comes next is the thirty-year peace treaty which Dikaiopolis greets with the exclamation: “*Ō Dionysia!* This treaty oozes of ambrosia and nectar” (196).¹⁷⁷ In 421 BC, four years after the performance of the *Acharnians*, the Peace of Nicias was signed with a duration of fifty years (Thuc. 5.18.3). Unfortunately that peace lasted hardly seven years. The Peace of Nicias was undermined by various factors including dissatisfied allies who sabotaged it. This brings to the fore another challenge facing peace efforts. While both Athens and Sparta were the dominant members of their respective alliances, their smaller-size allies (i.e., Corinth, Boeotia, Corcyra, etc) were not hapless victims. On the contrary. Some of them were self-interested, and at times, manipulating political actors. Aristophanes does not seem blind to this reality. In contrast to the *Babylonians* and the *Acharnians* where all the blame is laid squarely on the shoulders of Athens, in the *Peace* (421 BC) the poet chastises some of the allies for hindering the peace efforts. For example, as Trygaios (Vine Harvester) and Hermes attempt to free the personified Peace out of the cave where she has been imprisoned, Trygaios delivers a number of jibes towards the allies for their complicity in fanning the flames of war.

Trygaios: Hey, these men aren't pulling equally! Pitch in there!...You'll be sorry for this, you Boetians! (426)

Hermes: But the Lakonians, friend, are pulling manfully (478).

¹⁷⁷According to Homer, ambrosia was the drink of the gods brought to Olympus by doves (*Odyssey* XII.

62), and while some commentators, such as Ste Croix (*The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 1972) are

fond of referring to the anti-war party in Athens as the “doves” we have no evidence here that Aristophanes is trying to establish a symbolic link between ambrosia-carrying doves and peace.

Trygaios: Well, isn't it awfully absurd that some of you are going all out, while others are pulling the opposite way? You're looking to get whacked, you Argives! (492).

Hermes: Men of Megara, why don't you go to hell? The goddess [Peace] remembers you with hatred, for you were the first to daub her with your garlic. And to the Athenians I say: ...If you really want to pull this goddess free, retreat a little seaward [i.e., abandon your ambitious plans for a land expansion](507).

Whether or not the above passage is representative of increased political astuteness or specific tailoring to a prevalent political environment on the part of Aristophanes is unclear.¹⁷⁸ What is clear, however, is that in the *Peace* Aristophanes offers his audience an ever-lasting peace, which in turn makes the *Acharnians*, with its proposed thirty-year peace, a “pragmatic” or, second-best peace.

¹⁷⁸ *Peace* was written on the eve of the Peace of Nicias.

3.5 The Anger of the Acharnian Chorus: Lines 203-279

Dikaiopolis exits the scene just as the Acharnian Chorus enters.

Chorus Leader: This way, everybody, chase him, and question every passer-by about the man! (205) It'll be a worthy thing for the city to arrest this man [*speaking to the audience*] please inform me, if anyone knows where on earth the man with the treaty has headed.

Chorus: He's fled, he's gone,
he's clean away. Damn and blast
these years of mine! (210)
Never in my youth,
when I could carry
a load of coal and run just behind Phayllus,¹⁷⁹
would this treaty bearer
pursued by me then,
have so easily
escaped or so
nimble skipped off (219).

Chorus Leader: But now, because my shin's arthritic and old Lacrateides legs weigh him down, he's gone (221).¹⁸⁰ But we must chase him: never let him boast that he gave us Acharnians the slip, old though we may be.

Chorus: That man, Father Zeus
and ye gods, who's made a truce
with our foes, (225)
though on my side malevolent war
waxes strong against them
on account of my lands.
Nor will I ease off, till like a reed
I impale them in revenge,
like a stake sharp and painful, up to the hilt, (230)
so that never again
will they trample my vines.

Chorus Leader: We must hunt for the man, and look to Peltingham, and chase him from land to land until he's found at last; (235) for never shall I have my fill of pelting him with stones.

¹⁷⁹ Famous athlete who had fought in the Battle of Salamis.

¹⁸⁰ The name Lacrateides means "Son-of-Great-Strength". Lacrateides was an actual historical figure who was also a political enemy of Pericles and this is just one of many points in the play where the reader is given to understand that the Acharnian Chorus is anti-Periclean.

The above passage is best understood from a historical, psychological and rhetorical context. The anger of the Acharnian Chorus is similar to the anger that the Acharnian men felt towards the Spartans for laying waste to their land (Thuc. 2.21) and towards Pericles for not ordering a retaliation attack (see §2.31). The above is the closest that Aristophanes comes to acknowledging and expressing that historical anger on stage. The same anger hindered the possibility of peace talks by playing directly into the hands of the war radicals. If the *Acharnians* was indeed an extraordinary attempt by Aristophanes to persuade the eponymous population to vote in support of peace talks, as I believe it is, it would have been essential for the playwright to devise a method by which to dissolve that anger. Aristophanes does devise, such a method within the context of Dikaiopolis' defence speech, as we shall soon see.

For the time being, however, we continue our analysis by turning to Dikaiopolis' first action following the obtainment of the peace treaty. Quite surprisingly, Dikaiopolis' first order of business is the observance of the Rural Dionysia, a popular religious festival that was organized by the various Athenian demes. A central feature of this festival was the procession of a ritual phallus followed by a sacrifice to Dionysus.¹⁸¹ At the metatheatrical level, it is amusing to note that, the *Acharnians* was performed within the context of the Rural Dionysia. By reenacting the Rural Dionysia at the theatre stage, Aristophanes, once again, deliberately muddles the boundaries between fantasy and reality; actors and audiences.

Dikaiopolis: Pray silence, silence! (241)

¹⁸¹ Habash, "Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," 561.

Chorus Leader: Quiet everyone! Didn't you hear the call for silence? This is the very man we're looking for! This way, everyone, out of the way; the man is coming out, apparently to make a sacrifice (240).

[*Dikaiopolis emerges from the central door with his wife, daughter, and two slaves who carry a large phallus*]

Dikaiopolis: Pray silence, silence! Basket Bearer, step forward Xanthias, hold that phallus up straight! Put the basket down daughter, so I can perform the preliminaries.

Daughter: Mother, hand me the broth ladle, so I can pour broth over this cake (246).

Dikaiopolis: There, that's good. O Lord Dionysus, may my performance of this procession and this sacrifice be pleasing to you, and may I and my household with good fortune celebrate the Rural Dionysia (250) now that I'm released from campaigning; and may the Thirty Year's Peace turn out well for me. Come now, my pretty daughter, be sure you bear the basket prettily, and keep a lemon-sucking look on your face. Ah, blest the man who'll wed you and get upon you a litter of kittens (255) as good as you are at farting when the dawn is nigh! Forward march! And when in the crowd, take special care that no one steals up and pinches your bangles. Xanthias, you two must keep your phallus erect behind the Basket Bearer! (260) I'll bring up the rear and sing the Phallic Hymn. And you, milady, watch me from the roof. Forward! (262)

Dikaiopolis: Phales, friend of Bacchus, (263)

Revel mate, nocturnal rambler,

Fornicator, pederast: (265)

after six years I greet you,

as gladly I return to my deme,

with a peace I made for myself,

released from bothers and battles

and Lamachuses¹⁸² (270)

Yes, it's far more pleasant Phales, Phales,

To catch a budding maid with pilfered wood-

Strymodorus' Thratta from the Rocky Bottom-

and grab her waist, lift her up, throw her down

and take her cherry (275).

Phales, Phales,

If you drink with us, after the carouse

At dawn you shall quaff a cup of peace;

And my shield shall be hung by the hearth (279).

The first part of the passage, namely, lines 241-62, is a celebration of wine for its power

“as a treaty and as peace.”¹⁸³ The same lines are also said to be an expression of gratitude

¹⁸² Diminutive form of Lamachus “Great Battler.”

¹⁸³ Habash, “Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes’ Acharnians,” 575.

towards Dionysus because he “reorients the city toward its rural roots and thus toward peace.”¹⁸⁴ The second part, lines 263-79, is a salute to Phales, a personification of the processional phallus. However, this salute (at times) appears to be somewhat problematic because it evokes a contradictory image to the one presented at the opening of the play (33-5). For example, when did pederasty and fornication become agrarian values? One possible way of resolving this paradox (albeit hesitantly on my part) is to suggest that Aristophanes was writing for a male audience.¹⁸⁵ In this case, Dikaiopolis’ narrative to Phales sought to create “a pleasurable state” of sexual mental excitement for the benefit of the same audience.¹⁸⁶

As Dikaiopolis goes about celebrating the Dionysia he makes no mention of a he-goat, Dionysus’ traditional sacrificial animal.¹⁸⁷ Instead, one hears only of a soup and a flat cake (245-6). This means that the soup and the flat cake become the “substitute sacrificial “victims” in Dikaiopolis’ version of Dionysian rites.¹⁸⁸ What is the significance of this? In the tragedy *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, just as Iphigeneia is about to be sacrificed to Artemis the goddess takes Iphigeneia from the altar and leaves a deer in her place. In other words, animal sacrifice substitutes human sacrifice. This raises the tantalizing

¹⁸⁴ Henrichs “Between City and Country: Cultic Dimensions of Dionysus in Athens and Attica,” 271.

¹⁸⁵ Haley, “The Social and Domestic Position of Women in Aristophanes.” 159.

¹⁸⁶ Wijnar, “Eroticism: One Common Universal Ground of Literary Texts,” 168.

¹⁸⁷ Dionysus’ sacrificial altar was located near the statue of Dionysus, and both were located meters away from the theatre stage at the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens. In the case of the Rural Dionysia, no doubt similar animal sacrifices took place although the location of sacrificial altars is not as clear (Wiles, *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Theatrical Meaning*, 57).

¹⁸⁸ Habash, “Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” 562.

possibility that Aristophanes, in a similar manner wants to do away with blood sacrifices. After all, if war means the spilling of blood on the earth, would it not be only fitting that peace should entail bread instead of flesh and wine instead of blood?

3.6 The Achilles' Heel of Persuasion: Refusal to Listen: Lines 280-392

Dikaiopolis barely has time to finish his hymn to Dionysus when the Acharnian Chorus confronts Dikaiopolis.

Chorus: That's the man! That one there! (280)

Pelt him! Pelt him! Pelt him! Pelt him! Hit him! Hit the pariah (*miarón*)! Won't you pelt him? Won't you pelt him?

[All except Dikaiopolis run inside]

Dikaiopolis: Heracles! What's going on? You'll smash my bowl!

Chorus: No, it's you we'll stone to death, foul (*miara*) fellow!

Dikaiopolis: On what grounds (*aitias*), venerable Acharnian elders?

Chorus: You ask that?

You're shameless and disgusting,
you traitor (*prodotas*) to your country (*patridos*),
the only one among us
to make peace, and then
you've the nerve to look me in the eye!

Dikaiopolis: But shouldn't you know my reasons for making peace?
Please listen!

Chorus: Listen to you? You're done for! We'll bury you under a mound of stones!

Dikaiopolis: Don't do it, at least till you've heard me out! Come now, hold off, good sirs (*ō agathoi*).

Chorus: I will not hold off!
And don't you give a speech;
for I hate you even more
than Cleon, whom
I intend to cut up
as shoeleather for the Knights.

Chorus Leader: I'm not going to listen to long speeches from you; you've made peace with the Spartans! I'm going to punish you instead.

Dikaiopolis: Good sirs, forget the Spartans for a moment and hear about my treaty, whether I was right to make one.

Chorus Leader: How can you say it's right to have any dealings at all with people who abide by no altar, no agreement, no oath?

Dikaiopolis: I know that even the Spartans, whom we treat too ruthlessly, are not responsible (*aitious*) for all our problems.

Chorus Leader: Not all of them? You criminal/rogue (*o panourge*)! You dare to say this right to our face, and then I'm to spare you?

Dikaiopolis: Not for all our problems, not all of them. Here and now, in fact, I could make a speech showing that in many respects they're the wronged party.

Chorus Leader: What you say is truly awful (*deinon*) and stomach-turning, if you'll dare to speak to us in defence of those whom we are at war with (*polemiōn*).¹⁸⁹

Dikaiopolis: And what's more, if what I say isn't just (*dikaia*) and doesn't seem right to the many (*plethei*), I'll be happy to speak with my head on a butcher's block!

Chorus Leader: Tell me, why are we sparing the stones, fellow demesmen, instead of unravelling this man till he's red as a scarlet cloak? [*Alluding to the Spartan's scarlet cloaks worn during war campaigns*] (320)

Dikaiopolis: What a dark ember blazed up in you then! Won't you listen? Won't you really listen sons of Acharneus?

Chorus Leader: Absolutely not.

Dikaiopolis: Then dire (*deina*) will be my suffering.

Chorus Leader: May I die if I listen to you!

Dikaiopolis: Don't say that Acharnians!

Chorus Leader: Count on being an instant goner! (324)

In addition to conveying the deep resentment and fury of the Acharnian Chorus, the above passage highlights in dramatic form the futility of persuasion when the other party is not willing to listen. The *thumos* of the Acharnians is so overwhelming, that they will not listen to a word of what Dikaiopolis had to say. Apart from that, for Strauss the decision by Dikaiopolis to defend his private peace *vis à vis* the argument that the Spartans were unjustly treated serves as proof that a private peace treaty is only justifiable if (a) the war is unjust, and/or (b) the recipient does not act from cowardice. Or to put it in his words,

¹⁸⁹ Both Henderson and Sommerstein translate the word *polemoîn* as "enemies" which renders the same sentence as: "to speak to us in defence of our enemies." Granted that this makes for a more fluid reading, *polemiōn* is a cognate of *polemos* (war) and while warring parties are usually enemies this is not *ipso facto*; two parties could be enemies and yet not fight. By the same token, two parties could fight without being enemies (think of gladiatorial fights). The word *echthrous*, on the other hand, is a more accurate rendition of "enemies" and indeed this is the word that Socrates uses in the *Republic* within the context of his dialogue with Polemarchus (War Leader) in regards to justice (332e). Moreover, the use of the word *polemiōn* (as opposed to *echthrous*) is more in tune with Aristophanes' peace message; after all it is easier to stop fighting someone who is not your "personal" enemy than someone who is.

...if peace is good and war is bad, it does not seem to make a difference who and of what character the enemy is. Yet can peace be better than war against an absolutely unjust enemy? Dikaiopolis is therefore driven to assert that the Spartans are not absolutely unjust, and not all injustices have been committed by the Spartans. The Acharnians are still more incensed by Dikaiopolis' boldness, not to say impudence, in defending the enemy.¹⁹⁰

Postponing for the time being our judgement on the justice of war, it becomes obvious at this point that unless Dikaiopolis is afforded some sort of a *deus ex machina* he will be stoned to death by his co-patriots. That *deus ex machina* takes the form of a bag of coal which, in an "absurd" manner, is taken by everyone involved to be an infant.

Dikaiopolis: Then I'll bite you! I'll kill in return your nearest (*philon*) and dearest (*philtaton*); for I've got hostages of yours; I'm going to fetch them and cut their throats! (227)

[*Dikaiopolis goes inside*]

Chorus Leader: Tell me, fellow demesmen, what does he mean by this threat against the Acharnians? He hasn't got somebody's child, one of ours, locked up in there, has he? Then why is he so cocky?

Dikaiopolis: [*Reappears holding a large knife and a coal basket, a characteristic Acharnian industry*] "Pelt me, if you like! And I'll murder this! [*Pointing the knife at the coal basket*] I'll see which among you has the care for kith and kindling!

Chorus Leader: Now we're done for! That coal basket is from my deme! Don't do what you're set on doing! Don't, oh don't!

Dikaiopolis: Kill I will. Shout away; I don't intend to listen.

Chorus: Then you'll kill this, my coeval, my coal-eague?

Dikaiopolis: You were deaf to my pleas a moment ago.

Chorus: Very well, say your peace, tells us here and now in what way the Spartan's your friend (*philos*) (340). For this dear little basket I'll never desert.

Dikaiopolis: Please begin by disgorging your stones on the ground.

Chorus: There you are, they're on the ground. Now lay down your sword.

Dikaiopolis: But maybe there are some stones lurking somewhere in your cloaks.

Chorus: It's shaken out to the ground. Don't you see it being shaken? Come, no excuses (*prophasin*), please, just lay down that weapon; (345) for this is getting shaken as I twirl in the dance.

¹⁹⁰ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 61.

Dikaiopolis: So you were all getting ready to shake your shouts at me, and some Parnasian coals¹⁹¹ were very nearly killed, and all because of their fellow demesmen's eccentricity. And in its fear this basket has dirtied me with a load of coal dust, like a squid (355). It's terrible (*deinon*) that the temper (*thumon*) of gentlemen should grow so vinegary that they throw stones and shout, and are unwilling to listen to something evenly balanced, (355) even when I'm ready to say on behalf of the Lakedaimonians, though I value (*philo*) my life (*psyche*).

Chorus: Then why don't you bring a butcher's block outside and state, hard man, whatever this great piece is that you've got to say?

An avid longing (*pothos*) grips me to know what's on your mind.

Chorus Leader: All right then, place the block here, the way you yourself prescribed for you ordeal, and begin your speech (365).

A number of observations are in order here. Whereas a short time ago the angry Acharnian Chorus were claiming that they would rather die than listen to him (323), once *fear* grips them, the same men claim that they are now enthralled by an avid desire (*pothos*) to know what is on Dikaiopolis mind (361). Strauss in a insightful but cynical manner writes: "they who were such passionate enemies of the Spartans because of the damage the Spartans had done to their property, cease to be passionate enemies of the Spartans when their passion appears to them to lead to complete destruction of their property." Or, in other words, Strauss continues, "they who regarded the betrayal of the fatherland as a heinous crime, which they must capitally punish on the spot, would rather tolerate betrayal of the fatherland than betrayal of the sources of their livelihood. Dikaiopolis has succeeded in convincing the fire-eating Marathon fighters that there is a higher good than the fatherland."¹⁹²

The Acharnians' utterance: "Very well, say your peace, tells us here and now in what way the Spartan's your friend (*philos*)" (340) is also not without significance.

¹⁹¹ Meaning from mountain Parnes, located in the Acharnae territory.

¹⁹² Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 62.

Dikaiopolis' mere suggestion that he wants to argue in favour of the Spartans leads to the suspicion that he is a philo-Lakonian. Given the modern-day concept of friendship as something apolitical, it might be hard for us to appreciate the political importance of friendship in ancient Athens. Yet, as Horst Hutter points out, friendship played an important role in the political, military and legal affairs. For example, friendship was a feature central to the social institution of hetaery or "union of friends."¹⁹³

Thus, the assumption by the Acharnian Chorus that Dikaiopolis is a friend of the Spartans is in reality an accusation, especially if their assumption of justice consisted of helping one's friends (*philous*) and harming (*kakōs*) one's enemies (*echthrous*).¹⁹⁴ During his defence speech Dikaiopolis attempts to dispel this suspicion by declaring that he hates the Lakedaimonians vehemently (*misō men Lakedaimonious sphodra*) (509). This utterance must be understood for what it is, a reassuring statement to the Acharnian Chorus (not to mention the theatre audience) that he is *not* a friend of the Spartans. By inference, his motivations for seeking peace did not stem from a desire to help the oligarchic Spartans by harming the democratic Athenians.

In regards to the hostage-taking scene it should be noted that it is modeled after Euripides' tragedy *Telephus*. It should also be noted that *Telephus* was itself a revisionist anti-war play. Aristophanes' decision to model this passage, and indeed much of the *Acharnians* (as allusions abound throughout) on *Telephus* is most fitting, considering

¹⁹³ Hutter, *Politics as Friendship*, 26-7.

¹⁹⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 332d.

Aristophanes' triple agenda of (a) rehabilitating his reputation in the court of public opinion following Cleon's impeachment; (b) continuing the message of anti-imperialism first laid out in the *Babylonians*; and (c) his advocacy of negotiated peace talks. This argument is better appreciated by focusing on the concept of intertextuality, that is, the manner in which Aristophanes shapes the meaning of his text in reference to Euripides' text (which was itself shaped by the meaning of the original myth).

We begin with the original myth. Telephus was the son of Hercules and the King of Mysia in Asia Minor. Somehow (details are sketchy) he was wounded by Achilles in a battle, prior to the Achaeans reaching Troy. When the wound would not heal Telephus consulted the Delphic Oracle and was told that the wounding spear was also the healing spear. According to the same myth, Telephus managed to convince Achilles to heal him, and in exchange Telephus guided the Achaeans to Troy.

We now turn to Euripides' version. Euripides alters the original myth in significant ways in his eponymous (lost) tragedy. Surviving fragments suggests that Telephus sought Klytemnestra's help and, after disguising himself as a beggar, kidnapped baby Orestes, demanded, and was granted an audience. During his speech Telephus not only defends himself, but he also defends the Trojans by arguing that it was the Achaeans' fault that the war broke out. The leader of the Achaeans, Agamemnon, expresses outrage at being told that he was wrong to have started the war, "least of all by a beggar" (i.e., Agamemnon being ignorant of King Telephus' disguise).

More importantly, Telephus was ushered before Agamemnon while the latter was in the mists of a quarrel with his brother Menelaus. The two brothers are said to have been arguing about the course of war. Following the Mysian battle fiasco a discouraged Agamemnon was advocating a withdrawal, while Menelaus was arguing for a

continuation of the war. Thus, Telephus' speech takes place during an internal debate in the Achaean camp whether or not to continue the Trojan War.¹⁹⁵ At first Achilles refuses to treat Telephus, claiming lack of knowledge. However, a reflective and conciliatory Odysseus who is "concerned with resolution of the problem caused by Achilles' aggression" reasons with Achilles and persuades him to clean Telephus' wound in what has been described as an empathetic gesture.¹⁹⁶ After Achilles removes the spear shrapnel from the wound, Telephus is healed and in return Telephus guides the Achaeans to Troy.¹⁹⁷

Taking into consideration Euripides' adaptation it becomes easier to understand why Aristophanes chose this tragedy. Euripides' version depicting an internal war debate in the Achaean camp about the Trojan War, mirrors the internal war debate in the Athenian camp about the Peloponnesian War. In Aristophanes' comic adaptation a bag of Acharnian produced-coal becomes baby Orestes and Dikaiopolis assumes the role of the wounded Telephus. In Aristophanes' version the Athenians are given the identity of the Achaeans and the Spartans are given the identity of the Trojans.

¹⁹⁵ Heath, "Euripides' *Telephus*," 274.

¹⁹⁶ Davies, "Euripides *Telephus* Fr. 149 (Austin) and the Folk-Tale Origins of the Teuthranian Expedition," 2000.

¹⁹⁷ Reckford, "Aristophanes' Old-And-New Comedy" 171, echoing Parcer, argues that Aristophanes engages in wordplay in the names "Acharnians" and "Achaeans" with negative connotations. The agreement is made that Aristophanes via "recurrent suggestion in the play" implies that they Acharnians were "joyless people," (a-char-nes, whereby *char* is the root of meaning of joy). Similar to the Acharnians, the Achaeans are said to "choose war to everyone's sorrow. They are, so to speak, the well-grieved Achaeans. The play on Acharnes/Achaioi helps establish the parody." Granted that the words are similar, this seems nonetheless to be coincidental; I see no effort on Aristophanes' part of seeking to establish a link.

At this point it should be said that Strauss is of the mind that, after disarming the Acharnian Chorus, Dikaiopolis could have simply “sent them away” but since Dikaiopolis is a just man, he uses his “stranglehold on them not to escape punishment for a capital crime but only to get a hearing for his side of the case.”¹⁹⁸ I would beg to differ with Strauss on this point. Justice is not the only thing that is keeping Dikaiopolis from sending away the Acharnian Chorus. Just as Telephus could not leave the Achaean camp until the man who had wounded him had also healed him, Dikaiopolis (aka Aristophanes) cannot restore his reputation until he explains and (hopefully) persuades the Athenian audience of his innocence. In other words, it is not Dikaiopolis but Aristophanes who does not “send” away the Chorus.

After securing a promise from the Acharnian Chorus that they will allow him to speak, we see Dikaiopolis emerging from his house carrying a butcher’s block while talking to the Acharnian Chorus *and* the theatre audience as he breaks the dramatic illusion by referring to himself as “Dikaiopolis” and Aristophanes interchangeably.

Dikaiopolis: Look, now: here’ the butcher’s block, (366) and here’s the man who’s ready to make a speech, such as he is. Don’t worry: I swear to god I won’t hide behind any shield (*enaspidōsomai*), but I will speak in defence of the Spartans just what I think (370). And yet I am very apprehensive: I know the way country people act, deeply delighted when some fraudulent personage eulogies them and the city, whether justly (*dikaia*) or unjustly (*kadika*); that’s how they can be bought and sold all unawares. And I know the hearts (*psyhas*) of the oldsters too, (375) looking forward only to biting with their ballots. And in my own case I know what Cleon did to me because of last year’s comedy. He hauled me before the Council (*bouleuterion*) and slandered me, and tongue-lashed me with lies, and roared like the Cycloborus (topical joke) and soaked me in abuse, so that I nearly died in a mephitic miasma of misadventure. So now, before I make my speech, please array myself in guise most piteous (*athliotaton*) (384).

¹⁹⁸ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 62.

Dikaiopolis' decision to go looking for a pitiable disguise triggers a suspicious response by the Chorus and Chorus Leader respectively.

Chorus: Why this dodging and scheming and contriving delays? For all I care you may get from Hieronymus a dim dense shaggy-manned cap of invisibility (390) (topical joke).

Chorus Leader: Come now, disclose your Sisyphean ruses: this case will acknowledge no mitigating circumstances! (392)

It was an Old Comedy convention that during the parabasis the playwright spoke to the theatre audience via the mouthpiece of the Chorus Leader. In the *Acharnians* Aristophanes does not follow this convention. The actor playing Dikaiopolis turns to the audience and speaks to them in the person of Aristophanes. By merging Dikaiopolis' identity to his own, Aristophanes now introduces a new variable into the play, namely, his own persecution. By so doing Aristophanes juxtaposes the sufferings of Euripides' *Telephus* to his own, to say nothing about Dikaiopolis' sufferings. Aristophanes/Dikaiopolis' choice of words such as: "slandered me", "tongue-lashed me", "roared", "soaked me in abuse", and "I nearly died" are battle-related words. The implied message here is that Aristophanes, similar to Telephus, is now wounded. But whereby Telephus was wounded physically, Aristophanes was wounded in the court of Athenian public opinion. Telephus seeks to heal his wound by seeking out the man who wounded him, Achilles. Aristophanes likewise seeks to heal the wound to his reputation, but he does not seek out the man who wounded him, Cleon. Instead, he seeks out the Athenian audience. Keeping in mind that Cleon had at his disposal the Athenian Assembly with a maximum capacity of 5,000 people, while Aristophanes had at his disposal the Theatre of Dionysus with a capacity of 11,000-17,000 people, the odds were stacked substantially in Aristophanes' favour.

While Cleon was a popular democratic politician and did have the power to file charges against Aristophanes in the *Boule*, he did not have the authority to convict Aristophanes. That power rested with the *bouleutai* (councilmen), ordinary Athenian citizens who were appointed to one-year rotational positions.¹⁹⁹ As we know, these councilmen dismissed Cleon's charges against Aristophanes. Nonetheless, what makes Dikaiopolis/Aristophanes above-mentioned comments particularly interesting (to say the least) is that the "historical" Acharnian men held, on account of their large population, a proportionally larger amount of seats in the *bouleuterion* (see §2.31). This meant that Aristophanes had found himself before Acharnian judges prior to the performance of the *Acharnians*. In that trial, Aristophanes managed to persuade the majority that he had not slandered Athens, the demos, or Athenian councilmen, as Cleon had claimed.

We do not know if the Acharnian councilmen voted for acquittal or conviction; we only know that the *majority* of the Council voted for acquittal. If we were to assume, however, that Aristophanes managed to persuade the Acharnian councilmen to acquit him, perhaps we could also assume that Aristophanes was hoping for a repetition of the same success not only in terms of his play (which was subsequently awarded 1st prize), but also in terms of the negotiated peace talks.

The decision by Aristophanes to reveal himself via the figure of Dikaiopolis leads Strauss to comment that Aristophanes, the comic poet, "first comes to sight as something lower

¹⁹⁹ Rhodes, *The Athenian Boule*, 1972.

than he is, in the disguise of an old rustic.”²⁰⁰ In making this comment Strauss no doubt had in mind the element of dramatic irony involving the deliberate underestimation of one’s self. Northrop Frye, attends to this element within his classification system (summarized below) of the hero. He writes:

1. If superior in *kind* both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a myth in the common sense of a story about a god.
2. If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: qualities of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him.
3. If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a *leader*. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject to both social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of the *high mimetic* mode, of most epic and tragedy.
4. If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic* mode, of most comedy and of realistic fiction.
5. If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the *ironic* mode.²⁰¹

Based on Frye’s classification system, Dikaiopolis is a hero of low mimetic mode and not a hero of the ironic mode that Strauss is hinting at. It would seem that Strauss is confusing Dikaiopolis with Strepsiades, a likewise older man from the countryside who claims dissatisfaction with the ways of the city. Yet, Dikaiopolis differs from Strepsiades significantly, as evidenced by his love and knowledge of the arts and his participation in politics.

²⁰⁰ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 63.

²⁰¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 33-4. The following section borrows heavily from Goodlad’s, *A Sociology of Popular Drama*, 46-9, discussion of literary theories of popular drama.

Be that as it may, Dikaiopolis/Aristophanes is not about to dismiss the angry Acharnian Chorus. Instead, seeing that he understands “the ways of the country people” (370-71), in that they enjoy personal eulogies (373) (i.e., being called Marathon-fighters for example!), Dikaiopolis cannot be blind to their tremendous potential. If he succeeds in bringing the Acharnian Chorus over to his camp not only will he save himself but he will also gain valuable allies.

Men who enjoy the benefits of the “absolute vote” however, *cannot* be persuaded with the element of fear. Dikaiopolis’ threat to kill the Acharnian “infant” (i.e., bag of coal) won him a hearing, not an acquittal. An acquittal, in turn, is most easily granted when the defendant appeals to the judges’ sense of magnanimity, generosity of spirit and compassion, with *genuine* (i.e., not ironic) cries of pity and a “beggarly” appearance. It is with this knowledge that Dikaiopolis delays his speech as he begins his search for a pitiable disguise. As we shall see soon enough, Dikaiopolis discovers the mask of a beggar in Euripides’ wardrobe. When Aristophanes places the mask of the beggar on top of Dikaiopolis’ mask, it is then, and only then, that we can resurrect Strauss’ argument that Aristophanes/Dikaiopolis puts on an ironic facade by the act of depreciating himself.

3.7 In Search of a Piteous Mask: Lines 393-479

Keeping in mind Miguel de Cervantes' saying that "The most difficult character in comedy is that of the fool, and he must be no simpleton that plays that part,"²⁰² we now turn our attention to Dikaiopolis' search for a piteous mask. Since his life is at risk Dikaiopolis cannot afford to disclose his "Sisyphean ruses" as the Acharnian Chorus demands (392).²⁰³ However, Dikaiopolis does take the theatre audience into his confidence as he begins walking towards the house of Euripides in search of a piteous theatrical prom.

Dikaiopolis: Now's the time to gain a sturdy heart (*psychen*), and make a visit to Euripides [*Dikaiopolis arrives in front of Euripides house and begins knocking*] Boy! Boy!

Slave: Who's that? (395)

Dikaiopolis: Is Euripides at home? (395)

Slave: He's home and not at home, if you get my point.²⁰⁴

Dikaiopolis: Home and not at home—how can that be?

Slave: It's straightforward, old sir. His mind, being outside collecting versicles, is not at home, while he himself is at home, with his feet up, composing tragedy.

Dikaiopolis: Three-blessed Euripides, that your slave renders you so convincingly! (400) Ask him to come out.

Slave: Quite impossible [*He shuts the door*].

Dikaiopolis: Do it anyway. Well, I won't leave; I'll keep knocking on the door. Euripides! Euripidion! (*diminutive form*) answer, if ever you answered any mortal (405). Dikaiopolis of Cholleidai calls you—'tis I.

²⁰² Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Charles Jarvis. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 489.

²⁰³ King Sisyphus of Corinth was a mythical figure notorious for his cunning.

²⁰⁴ According to Sommerstein (p. 173, n. 396) the "slave apes his master's style" whereby Euripides was fond of composing paradoxical phrases such as "she lives and lives not" (*Alcestis* 521); "I am in a sort of voluntary-involuntary exile" (*Iphigeneia in Tauris* 512); "I trust my mother and at the same time distrust her" (*Ph.* 272).

Euripides: [*from within*] I'm busy.

Dikaiopolis: Then have yourself wheeled out.

Euripides: Quite impossible.

Dikaiopolis: Do it anyway.

Euripides: All right, I'll have myself wheeled out; I've no time to get up.

[*Euripides is revealed reclining on a couch*].

Dikaiopolis: Euripides?

Euripides: Why this utterance?

Dikaiopolis: Do you compose with your feet up, when they could be down? (410) No wonder you create cripples! And why do you wear those rags from tragedy, a raiment piteous? No wonder you create beggars! But come, I beg you by your knees, Euripides, give a bit of rag from that old play (415). I've got to make a long speech to the Chorus, and if I speak poorly, it means my death.

Euripides: "Which ragged garb? [*rummaging through his costumes*] Not that in which this Oeneus, the star-crossed ancient, did content?"

Dikaiopolis: No, not from Oeneus, but someone even more wretched (*athlioterou*) (420)

Euripides: From Phoenix, who was blind?

Dikaiopolis: Not Phoenix, no; someone else more wretched than Phoenix.

Euripides: What tatters of robbing does this man seek? Do you mean those of the beggar Philoctetes?

Dikaiopolis: No someone far, far more beggarly than he (425).

Euripides: Then do you want the foul accouterment that this Bellerophon, the cripple, wore?

Dikaiopolis: Not Bellerophon, though the man I want was also a cripple, a beggar, a smooth-talker, an impressive speaker (*deinon legein*).

Euripides: I know that man: Mysian Telephus!

Dikaiopolis: Yes, Telephus! (430) Give me, I entreat you, his swaddlings!

Before we can determine why Dikaiopolis chooses the character of Telephus, we need to know why he rejects the other Euripidean characters. We learn that King Oeneus became an improvised exile at the hands of his nephews, and that Phoenix was blinded and exiled by his own father following his stepmother's false accusations. Philoctetes, we learn, was a castaway beggar, and Bellerophon ended up being a cripple. Phoenix, in particular, was punished because of his failure to persuade his father. The fact that Phoenix was punished despite being innocent implies that persuasive skills are crucial when one finds themselves the target of accusations (i.e., the case of Aristophanes following Cleon's impeachment). Judging from the above, one could argue that Dikaiopolis rejects Oeneus,

Phoenix, Philoctetes and Bellerophon not only because they were not as “pitiable” as Telephus, but because they were not as persuasive.²⁰⁵ Be that as it may, Euripides obliges Dikaiopolis requests with no objections.

Euripides: Boy, give him the garments of Telephus. They lie above the Thyestean rags, 'tween them and Ino's.

Slave: Here, take them.

Dikaiopolis: [*Inspecting the rugs*] O Zeus who sees everywhere, through and under! (435) Euripides, since you've been so kind to me, please give me what goes along with the rugs: that little Mysian beanie for my head (440). For the beggar must I seem to be today: to be who I am, yet seem not so. The audience (*theatas*) must know me for who I am, but the Chorus must stand there like simpletons, so that with my pointed phrases I can give them the long finger.²⁰⁶

Euripides: I'll give it, for you contrive finely with your dense mind (445).

Dikaiopolis: [*Putting on the cap*] God bless you (*eudaimonoies*), and as for Telephus-what's in my thoughts! Bravo! How I'm filling up with phraselets already! But I do need a beggar's cane.

Euripides: Take this, and begone from these marble halls.

Dikaiopolis: My soul, you see how I'm driven from the halls still needing many props (450). So now be whiny, beggarly, and precatory! [*Turning towards Euripides*] Euripides, give me a little basket burned through by a lamp!

Euripides: What need have you, poor wretch, for this wickerwork?

Dikaiopolis: No need at all; I want to have it anyway (455).

Euripides: Know you are irksome, and depart my halls!

Dikaiopolis: Whew! God's blessings on you – at once on your mother!

Euripides: Now pray begone!

Dikaiopolis: No, but give me just one thing more, a little goblet with a broken lip.

Euripides: Take this one – to blazes! Know you are troublesome to my halls! (460)

Dikaiopolis: By Zeus, you don't yet realize how much trouble (*kaka*) you make yourself! – But my sweetest Euripides, just give me that little bottle plugged with a sponge.

²⁰⁵ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 111, n. 55, 56, 57, 58.

²⁰⁶ This dramatic technique draws the spectators closer to the playwright but at the same time it also distances the author from the audience by enacting multiple layers of separation. The only other ancient author to make use of this dramatic *modus operandi* (that I am aware of) is Plato with the most famous example being Socrates' speech in the *Symposium* where the level of dramatic distance is increased threefold. Apollodorus recounts the story from memory (174a - first level), which in turn was told to him by Aristodemus (173b - second level). While, Socrates' speech is a retelling of a story originally told by Diotima (201d - third level).

Euripides: Fellow, you'll make off with my whole tragedy! Take this and begone!

Dikaiopolis: I'm off. (465) [*He stops suddenly*] Hold on, what am I doing? There's one thing missing, which if I don't have, I'm lost. Listen, my sweetest Euripides, with this I'll go, and never come again. Give me some withered greenery for my little basket.

Euripides: You'll destroy me! Here you are. [*Tearfully*] Gone are my dramas!

Dikaiopolis: No more; I'll go. Indeed I am too troublesome, though little thought I the chieftans hate me so [*possible quote from Telephus*] Good heavens me, I'm ruined! I've forgotten the one thing on which all my plans depend. My sweetest, dearest Euripidoodle, a wretched death be mine if ever again I ask you for anything – save just one thing, only this one, only this one: give me some chervil from you mother's store (unclear joke).

Euripides: The man's outrageous (*aner yvrize!*)!²⁰⁷ Batten the barriers of my domicile! (478)

From a philosophical perspective, Aristophanes “borrows” from Euripides with the aim of constructing and articulating his own anti-war philosophy. This argument, namely, that of “borrowing” from other artists/authors in order to create something new, is found in Alexander Nehamas’ *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*. Here, we find that Nehamas does *not* berate Montaigne for his eclectic “ornaments” that he “borrows” from Plato and Xenophon alike.²⁰⁸ On the contrary. Nehamas argues that, to the extent that Montaigne uses earlier texts for his own purposes, in order to “fashion something truly his own”, this is not only legitimate but also necessary. And it is necessary, according to the same author, because “the path to the self must cross the paths of others...almost purely as means. There is no such thing as a direct confrontation with oneself,” continues Nehamas, “that way only emptiness lies.” If Montaigne is justified in fashioning bouquets out of “other people’s flowers” one can hardly berate Aristophanes. The only man to tease (not berate) Aristophanes for his wholesome theft of Euripidean tragedy to which Aristophanes mischievously admits (*Acharnians* 470) was Cratinus. He

²⁰⁷ Notice that when Cleon indicted Aristophanes one of the accusations was that he was outraging the demos, *demon kathivrize!* (*Acharnians* 631) where “*kathivrize!*” is a compound word *kathi-vrize!*.

²⁰⁸ Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, 116-8.

coined the famous phrase “euripidaristophanizein” to describe Aristophanes’ tendency to parody Euripides while imitating him, a charge that carried the implication that Aristophanes was the “most sophisticatedly influenced of comic poets”²⁰⁹ (see Appendix III on one of the most fascinating yet least studied literary agons).

From a theatrical perspective, Henderson argues that Aristophanes, by his extensive usurpation of Euripides’ tragedy, borrows from the “authority of tragedy, creates a play within a play, and constructs a complex layering of disguises that work on several layers simultaneously (Telephus vs. Greeks ~ Dikaiopolis vs. Acharnians ~ Aristophanes vs. Athenians).” Henderson correctly points out that Aristophanes also calls attention to what “he is up to as a playwright, thus educating the spectators about the nature of theatrical illusion and persuasion generally.”²¹⁰

Nevertheless, what Henderson perceives to be earnest didaskalia, Strauss perceives to be earnest irony. Commenting on Dikaiopolis’ utterance, “the beggar must I seem to be today: to be who I am, yet seem not so. The audience (*theatas*) must know me for who I am, but the Chorus must stand there like simpletons (*elithious*), so that with my pointed phrases I can give them the long finger (*rematious skimalisō*)” (440-44), Strauss writes:

The beggar’s outfit is not meant to deceive the audience, but only the Chorus, which, while pretending to consist of old Acharnians, must only pretend to see in him a most pitiable man in mortal danger at its hands. The comic poet can not go further in urging his audience not to take him seriously but to laugh with him about him. Yet this extreme self-depreciation is not indeed the most compassion-arousing, but the most laughable or most lowly disguise. Comedy itself is the most

²⁰⁹ Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes: Acharnians*, 6.

²¹⁰ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 51.

effective disguise of wisdom. The parody of a tragic hero in filthy rags is a still better disguise than that tragic hero himself. In other words, in pretending to take the majority of the citizens (the audience consisting chiefly of genuine “Acharnians”) into his confidence against a tiny minority (the Chorus consisting of the alleged Acharnians), he in fact conspires with a wise minority in the audience against the large majority.²¹¹

By arguing as such Strauss acknowledges the ancient prejudice that theatre audiences were composed of two types, a wise minority and an unwise majority (*Clouds* 763). Plato’s Agathon in the *Symposium* (194b) takes this prejudice further by arguing that the few men of intelligence who possess reason (*noun*) are to be feared more than the many unintelligent ones.²¹² The entire sentence reads: “*Ti de, ō Sōcrates; ton Agathōna phanai, ou depou me outō theatrou meston ege, ōste kai agnoiein, oti noun ehonti oligoi emphrones pollōn aphronōn phoveroterōi.*” Walter Lamb (1983) translates this as: “Why, Socrates,” said Agathon, “I hope you do not always fancy me so puffed up with the playhouse as to forget that an intelligent speaker is more alarmed at a few men of wit than at a host of fools.” At the risk of deviating from our topic, I would like to point out that Socrates’ reassuring response to Agathon that he does not identify him with such “agroikon doxazōn” (194c) to which Lamb translates as “clownish notion” is inaccurate because *agroikon* connotes countrymen or country folk much the same way that Dikaiopolis claims he knows the manner of the countrymen “*tropous tous ton agroikōn*” (371). All this, in order to simply say that there is a tremendous amount of intertextuality in Plato’s works that remains unappreciated.

²¹¹ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 64-5.

²¹² My translation.

Back to our subject, the word *noun* is interchangeable with reason, mind, intellect and/or common sense and at the conclusion of his defence speech we find Dikaiopolis declaring that if his audience believes anything else *other than* what he told them, then, they all lack *nous* (*nous ar emin ouk eni*) (556). This utterance causes the split of the once unified Chorus into two camps. One segment remains anti-peace and anti-Dikaiopolean, but the other switches its alliance and becomes pro-peace and pro-Dikaiopolean.

CHAPTER IV. PERSUASION & SPEECH

4.1 Dikaiopolis' Defence Speech: Lines 480-556

Can peace be better than war against an absolutely unjust enemy?

Leo Strauss²¹³

An unjust peace is better than a just war.

Cicero²¹⁴

As Dikaiopolis begins walking away from Euripides' house towards the Acharnian Chorus and the chopping block we hear him speaking to his *thumos*, prodding, almost begging for his heart to gain courage.

Dikaiopolis: My soul (*ō thum'*) without chervil must you venture forth (480). Don't you realize what a great contest (*agon*) you will soon contest (*agōniei*), when you speak in defence of Lakedaimonian men? Forward now, my soul (*ō thume*); there's your mark. You hesitate? Won't you get going, now that you've downed a draught of Euripides? [*He takes a step or two*] Bravo! Come on now, my foolish heart (*kardia*) (485), get on over there, and then offer up your head on the spot, after you've told them what you yourself believe (*doke*). Be bold, go on, move out. [*He goes and stands before the butcher's block*] Well done my heart! (489)

"His trembling heart" writes Strauss, "must speak in favour of the Spartans, with him in danger of losing his head, but at his command it ceases to tremble."²¹⁵ Actually, it is Dikaiopolis *thumos* as well as his heart that is trembling, but if we take both to be the same thing this makes no difference. In the manner of a fearful Homeric hero, Dikaiopolis externalizes his *thumos*, but rather than scolding it he gives it encouragement.

²¹³ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 61.

²¹⁴ As quoted in BBC, "Words of Wisdom, Guiding Lights,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A638174>

²¹⁵ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 65.

Dikaiopolis' heart needs this encouragement because he is about to face a hostile audience while navigating between the Scylla of claiming that Sparta was not to blame for the war, and the Charybdis of saying that Athens was not to blame for that war either. An impossible task to be sure, but one that Dikaiopolis must accomplish if he is to be acquitted. The Acharnian Chorus senses Dikaiopolis predicament and, while still angry at him, they notice that he does not tremble as he stands with his head over the chopping block.

Chorus: What will you do? What will you say? You must realize that you are a shameless and a man of iron²¹⁶ (491) you who have offered your neck to the city and mean to speak alone against everyone. The man does not tremble at his task (495). Very well: since you've made the choice yourself, speak!

With that, Dikaiopolis begins his much awaited, defence speech that will decide whether he lives or dies on account of his logos' persuasiveness.

Dikaiopolis: Do not be aggrieved with me, men (*andres*) spectators (*theōmenoi*), if though a beggar, I am ready to address the Athenians about the polis, while making (*poiōn*) *trugōdia*. For even *trugōdia* is acquainted with justice (*to gar dikaion*). What I have to say is shocking (*deina*) but just (*dikaia*). This time Cleon will not accuse me of slandering (*kakōs legō*) the city in the presence of foreigners,²¹⁷ for we are by ourselves; it's the Lenaeon competition, and no foreigners are here yet; neither tribute nor troops have arrived from the allied cities. This time we are by ourselves, clean-hulled – for I count the resident foreigners as the bran of our populace. Myself (*ego*), I hate the Lakedaimonians vehemently; and may Poseidon, the god at Tainarum, send them an earthquake and shake all their houses down on them; (510) for I too have had vines cut down. And yet I ask—for only friends (*philoī*) are present for this speech--why do we blame (*aitiōmetha*) the Lakonians for this? (515) For it was men of ours—I do not say the polis, remember that, *I do not say the polis*—but some trouble-making excuses for men, misminted, worthless, brummagem, and foreign-made, who begun denouncing the Megarians' little cloaks. (520) If anywhere they spotted a cucumber or a bunny, or a piglet or some garlic or rock salt, these were “Megarian” and sold off the very same

²¹⁶ “Steely man” (Henderson); “a man of iron” (Sommerstein).

²¹⁷ Bailey, “Who Played Dicaeopolis,” 231-40, suggests that Aristophanes himself played the part of

Dikaiopolis.

day.²¹⁸ Now granted, this was trivial and strictly local. But then some tipsy, cottabus-playing youths went to Megara and kidnapped the whore Simaetha. (525) And then the Megarians, garlic-stung by their distress, in retaliation stole a couple of Aspasia's whores, and from that the onset of war broke forth upon all the Greeks: from three sluts! And then in wrath (*orgē*) Pericles, that Olympian, did lighten and thunder and stir up Greece, and started making laws worded like drinking songs, that Megarians should abide neither on land nor in market nor on sea nor on shore.²¹⁹ Whereupon the Megarians starving by degrees, (535)²²⁰ asked the Lakedaimonians to bring about a reversal of the degree in response to the sluts; but we refused, though they asked us many times. And then there was clashing of the shields. Someone will say: "they shouldn't have!" (540) But tell me, what should they have? (530). Look, if some Lakedaimonian had denounced and sold a Seriphian puppy imported in a rowboat, would you have sat quietly by in your abodes? Far from it! No indeed: you'd have instantaneously dispatched three hundred ships; (545) the city would fill with the hubbub of soldiers, clamour around the skipper, pay disbursed, emblems of Pallas being gilded, the Colonnade reverberating, rations being measured out, wallets, oarloops, buyers of jars, garlic, olives, onions on nets, (550) garlands, anchovies, piper girls, black eyes. And the dockyards would be full of oarspans being planned, thudding dowelpins, oarports being bored, pipes, bosuns, whistling and tooting. I know that's what you'd done: and do we reckon that Telephus wouldn't? Then we've got no brains (*noūs*)! (556)

²¹⁸ Henderson informs us that Dikaiopolis is probably alluding to the suspicion that they [Megarian goods] were probably imported without the payment of duties (*Acharnians/Knights*, 121, n. 67).

²¹⁹ One suggestion holds that Aristophanes is parodying a popular ballad of the time: "O blind Plutus, you ought not to show yourself either on land, or sea, or on the continent, but remain in Tartarus and Acheron; for men suffer every kind of evil through you." If this is the case, the implication is that the Megarian Decree in effect banished the Megarians to Hades, having declared land, sea, agora, and, for good measure, heaven itself, off limits" (Legon, *Megara: The Political History of a Greek City-State to 336 B.C.*, 212).

²²⁰ Surely, the historian may object at this point, Aristophanes was exaggerating the economic impact of the embargo. To this objection it should be pointed out that the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1994) defines "exaggeration" as nothing more than the magnification "beyond...truth"; meaning that at the root of every exaggeration lies some truth. Thus, while the Megarians might not have been on the verge of death, they were no doubt suffering. On the Athenians' repeated refusals to lift the economic embargo see Thucydides (1. 139-146).

The imaginative, witty, exuberant pace of lyrical poetry in Dikaiopolis/Telephus' speech is breathtaking, especially the exquisite rhyming of lines 530-56 (unfortunately lost in translation), and worthy of a prize itself for artistic merit. But while poetic merit might have been a factor in the decision-making process of the ten Lenean judges, the Acharnian Chorus is oblivious to this aspect. As for us, we are only interested in the political merit of Dikaiopolis' *logos*. With that in mind, we begin our detailed analysis. Wearing the same mask as King Telephus, Dikaiopolis begins by requesting leniency for the fact that, although a beggar, he is about to address the citizenry about the state while making *trugōdia* (see Appendix IV for a more detailed discussion of *trugōdia*).

We begin by highlighting Aristophanes' strong intertextuality with Euripides. Where Euripides' disguised Telephus claims: "*me moi phthoneset', andres Ellenon akroi, ei ptōhos ōn tetlek' en esthloisin legein*" (Do not be aggrieved with me, Greek leading men, if though a beggar, I dare to speak amongst my betters) (fr. 703), Aristophanes' disguised Dikaiopolis likewise claims: "*me moi phthoneset', andres oi theōmenoi, ei ptōhos ōn epeit' en Athenaiōis legein*" (Do not be aggrieved with me, men spectators, if though a beggar, I am ready to speak amongst the Athenians) (497-99). Also, just as Euripides' disguised King Telephus claims that he was going to speak about the *dikaia* despite having his head on the chopping block, Aristophanes' disguised Dikaiopolis makes a similar claim.

At the personal level Aristophanes seizes on the fact that one of Cleon's indictments against him was that of *adikia*.²²¹ At the public level, Aristophanes takes this opportunity to introduce to the audience the birth of a new theatrical genre: *trugōdia*, which is what

²²¹ Schol. *Acharnians* 378.

Aristophanes considers his *Acharnians* to be. At first look, *trugōdia* seems to be a hybrid between comedy and tragedy reminding one of Socrates' comment that a fully skilled tragedian could write comedies as well as tragedies (*Symposium* 223d). In our case we are interested solely on the political aspects of *trugōdia*, especially *trugōdia*'s conception of justice. With that in mind we turn to Taplin, and his interpretation of *trugōdia*. He claims:

...this does not mean 'even comedy knows what is right', as it is usually taken, so much as *trugody too* knows what is right' – as well as tragedy, that is. If so, then this implies a priori that tragedy knows what is right. It assumes, moreover, that tragedy's acquaintance with justice is something that everybody knows about and takes for granted – the novelty is to claim the same for comedy.²²²

While we know that the Old Comedy poets attacked politicians, it is not altogether clear whether they provided a rationale for their attacks or whether it was simple name-calling à la *Archilochus*. For example, we know that Cratinus' "raw power"²²³ rested on pure, simple, obscene, iambic poetry. He was the father of political comedy and a playwright who was known for coursing through "open plains, sweeping oaks, plane trees, and enemies from their moorings and bearing them off uprooted" (*Knights* 526). Had Cratinus been the author of Dikaiopolis' speech we cannot be sure whether or not he would have mentioned the Megarian Degree. We could be sure, however, that he would have slandered Pericles in a more vicious manner than Aristophanes, and indeed this is exactly what he does in the *Cheirons* where he writes:

Stasis and elderborn Time,
mating with one another
birthed a very great tyrant

²²² Taplin, "Tragedy and Trugedy," 333.

²²³ Storey, *Eupolis, Poet of Old Comedy*, 48.

whom the gods call “head-gatherer” (258 K-A)²²⁴

while in reference to Aspasia, Cratinus writes:

Shameless Lust bears him Hera-Aspasia,
a dog-eyed concubine (259 K-A)²²⁵

Aristophanes, on the other hand, while still engaging in slandering (i.e., by suggesting that Pericles’ mistress was a brothel owner) provides a reason for that slander (i.e., Pericles enacted the Megarian embargo that deteriorated relations between Sparta and Athens). Be that as it may, we now turn our attention to what sort of *dikaia* did *trugōdia* know. The Dikaiopolean Beggar claims that he hates the Lakedaimonians because, similar to the Acharnian Chorus, he has suffered as a result of their attacks. In case his audience doubts that statement he immediately adds, “and may Poseidon, the god at Tainarum, send them an earthquake and shake all the houses down on them” (510). If not for the invocation of “Poseidon, the god at Tainarum” this would have been a simple, good-old fashion Greek curse, namely, “you have caused me suffering and I wish you suffering in return.” However, the image of Poseidon as the god of Tainarum *and* as the sender of house-shattering earthquakes is laden with meaning, both in terms of domestic Spartan politics and Spartan-Athenian relations. As I undertake to demonstrate this, and show its overall significance for Aristophanes’ message, I would ask the reader to bear with me as we shift through the historical evidence.

In Hellenic mythology Poseidon was the god of the sea and earthquakes. In his capacity as a sea-god, a temple was erected in his honour at Cape Tainarum,²²⁶ which was

²²⁴ Henry, *Prisoner of History: Aspasia of Miletus and Her Biographical Tradition*, 20.

²²⁵ O’Higgins, *Women and Humor in Classical Greece*, 112, holds that a more accurate translation (in regards to Aspasia) is: “[she] was born of Time and Anal-Intercourse.”

located at the western tip of Lakonia. On account of its remoteness from the Spartan heartland it was the ideal escape route for helots. Around 464, however a failed escape attempt forced some helots to seek refuge in Poseidon's temple. Contrary to divine law the Spartans executed the refuges and the resulting sacrilege came to be known as the "Curse of Tainarus." When a devastating earthquake hit Lakonia, levelling all but five houses in Sparta,²²⁷ many attributed this earthquake to Poseidon's anger.²²⁸ The helot population, outnumbering the Spartans by one to ten, took advantage of the upheaval and forced the Spartans to request help from the Athenians with whom they had friendly relations at the time.²²⁹ According to Thucydides (1.45.2) the Athenians responded by sending four thousand Athenian infantrymen under the command of Kimon, a philo-Lakonian who had gone so far as to name one of his sons' Lakedaimonius. Kimon was summoned to Lakonia once again in 466 when the Spartans were confronted with yet another helot rebellion, this time in Ithome, Messenia (Lakonia's neighbour and homeland to many of the helots).

This time around, however, Ephialtes, of the Democratic Party, opposed the deployment and advocated leaving the Spartans to fend for themselves.²³⁰ During

²²⁶ Cape Taenarum is an alternative spelling.

²²⁷ Plutarch, *Cimon*, 16 4-7.

²²⁸ Thuc. *Hist.* I. 128.

²²⁹ Reference to this event is mentioned in *Lysistrata* (1138).

²³⁰ Plutarch, *Cimon*, 16.8. Some readers will, understandably, be sceptical of using Plutarch as a source of information considering the fact that he lived five centuries after his subjects. As Kagan (1991) argues, however, Plutarch had an excellent library containing many works that are now lost to us and, if used with care, Plutarch's work is an excellent source of authentic information.

Kimón's second absence, Ephialtes and a young Pericles begun "espousing the cause of the populace"²³¹ and modified the existing Cleisthenic constitution in the "direction of a more radical form of democracy."²³² Once news of the democratic uprising reached the ears of the conservative Spartans and "while keeping the rest of their allies, they sent the Athenians home...declaring that they had no further need of Athenian help." Thucydides is of the opinion that the Spartans had grown afraid of the Athenians' daring and unorthodox behaviour (*neoteropioian*) and after reflecting that they were of a "different tribe", feared that if the Athenians remained "they might be persuaded by the people in Ithome and become the sponsors of some revolution."²³³ The Athenians, continues Thucydides, "were deeply offended, considering that this was not the sort of treatment

²³¹ Plutarch, *Cimon*, 15.1.

²³² Marr, "Ephialtes the Moderate?", 11. The origins and evolution of democracy in ancient Athens continues to receive intense scholarly attention. Recent arguments to be found in the literature include: The "democratization" of Athens did not begin with Solon's reforms or Peisistratos' reign, but with the tribal and political reforms of Kleisthenes (Anderson *The Athenian Experiment: Building an Imagined Political Community in Ancient Attica*, 2003); Ambitious Athenian aristocrats begun catering to the demos before loosing control (Eder, *Democracy 2500?: Questions and Challenges*, 1997); Continued pressure by anonymous, majority, non-elite Athenians resulted in greater economic and political concessions from aristocrats (Ober 1998, 2000); The rise of hoplite warfare and navy led to increased political power for hoplites and sailors (Carey 2000, Sinclair 1988), (for a summary see: Raaflaub et al., *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, 2007).

²³³ Charles Smith translates «ἢν παραμείνωσιν ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰθώμη πεισθέντες νεωτερίωσι» as: "if they [Athenians] remained, they might be persuaded by the rebels on Ithome to change sides" (1956, 171), while Rex Warner translates it as, "if they [Athenians] stayed on in the Peloponnese, they might listen to the people in Ithome and become the sponsors of some revolutionary policy (1954, 95).

that they deserved from Sparta, and, as they had returned, they denounced the original treaty of alliance which had been made against the Persians and allied themselves with Sparta's enemy, Argos" (*Hist.* I.102). And just when Sparta thought things could not get any worse, the Athenian democrats ostracized Kimon. Soon after, Pericles began the transformation of Athens into a naval empire. When all was said and done, a "party hostile to Athens was in control of Spartan policy, and the enemies of Sparta were in command at Athens."²³⁴

Some thirty years later the Spartan conservatives had neither forgotten nor forgiven Pericles, and during the pre-war negotiations they sought to remove him from Athens. Being a people who took pride in their religious piety they thought it best to invoke some sort of religious propaganda. After some antiquarian religious research they uncovered the "Curse of the Goddess"²³⁵ and they demanded that Athens "cleanse" itself by expelling the descendants of those Athenians (read Pericles) who had committed that sacrilege in 630 BC. Not to be outdone, Pericles "who was not a neophyte in the art of political propaganda,"²³⁶ countered that the Spartans must drive out "The Curse of

²³⁴ Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, 74.

²³⁵ Cylon, an Athenian aristocrat, seized the Acropolis in the hope of becoming a tyrant. The siege went badly and Cylon's supporters became trapped. The starving refugees were lured outside of the temple on promises that they would not be harmed, only to be killed outside or as they sought refuge in the nearby temple of the Dread Goddesses (Furies). The murderers were nine Athenian archons including Megacles of the Alkmaeonid genos who was subsequently exiled for his sacrilege (Thuc. 1.127). Pericles was Megacles' descendant. To be exact, Pericles was the son of Agariste, Agariste was the daughter of Hippocrates, and Hippocrates was the son of Megacles (Herodotus, 6.131.1).

²³⁶ Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, 320.

Tainarus”²³⁷ (Thuc. 1.127), and for a good measure he added a second curse, the so-called “Curse of the Goddess of the Brazen Horse.”²³⁸ As much as the Spartan conservatives wanted Pericles removed, Thucydides is correct in arguing that they did not realistically believe that the Athenians would exile Pericles; the real objective of their propagandistic demand was to undermine Pericles’ power in Athens.

Returning to our passage, the claim by the Dikaiopolean Beggar: “may Poseidon, the god at Tainarum, send them an earthquake and shake all their houses down on them” (510) reminds the Acharnian Chorus of Sparta’s sacrilegious past. However, it also reminds them of their own sacrilegious past (after all it is rare that one can be reminded of their enemies’ sins while remaining oblivious to their own). The next question becomes: “Why is Dikaiopolis reminding the audience of this?” If we recall, the Acharnian Chorus was displaying a “holier than thou” attitude towards Sparta and were refusing to entertain

²³⁷ Keeping in mind that killing refugees in sacred grounds was sacrilegious, independent of why or who the refugees were, nonetheless the barometer of justice stood lower for Sparta in comparison to Athens. In the case of Athens the “refugees” were ambitious aristocrats undertaking a *coup d’ état* with the aim of installing a dictatorship. In the case of Sparta the “refugees” were helots attempting to escape harsh slavery (for to be a slave in Sparta was a worse fate than being a slave in Athens). However, when Athens decided to send Kimon to help subdue the helot’s uprising, the barometer of justice reached an equal level for both city-states with Athens becoming Sparta’s accomplice. In the end, the characterization of Athens and Sparta as Greek hegemon is not an altogether inaccurate description.

²³⁸ The Ephors starved King Pausanias to death inside the temple of the Goddess of the Brazen Horse (Thuc. *Hist.* I. 134). Keeping in mind that the second curse involved the starving of a Spartan king by Ephors (Thuc. *Hist.* I. 128), and keeping in mind that Pericles was a personal friend of King Archimados (*Hist.* 2.13) this leaves the Ephors as the architects of all this plotting. As such, it would be safe to infer that it was the Ephors who were the so-called hawks or war party.

the very idea of engaging in peace talks, because, according to them, the Spartans were people who did not abide by any altar, agreement or oath (308). From this perspective, Dikaiopolis is reminding the Athenians (in a “gentle tone”) that Athens, similar to Sparta, was not beyond moral reproach in terms of its political history.

After ascertaining that he is no friend of the Spartans, the Dikaiopolean Beggar says: “And yet I ask – for only friends are present for this speech – why do we blame the Spartans for this? For it was men of ours – I do not say the polis, remember that, I do not say the polis” (513-514). This utterance prompts Strauss to write:

God forbid that Dikaiopolis should say that the Athenians, the city of Athens, started the war. Just as Plato’s Socrates distinguishes between the unblamable laws and the blameworthy human administration of the laws, Dikaiopolis distinguishes between the unblamable city and the blameworthy human administration of the city.²³⁹

True enough. Speculating over the same point one could also suggest that the art of persuasion prohibits Dikaiopolis from asserting that the members of the audience are blameworthy at the risk of alienating and angering them. After all, finger-pointing does not facilitate persuasion, only anger and self-imposed deafness. As such, Dikaiopolis undertakes a diplomatic rhetoric that states that neither Sparta nor Athens was to blame for the outbreak of hostilities. A win-win situation to be sure, but one that, by the very nature of the claim, requires a scapegoat.

Thus, rather than blaming the city the Dikaiopolean Beggar lays the blame on some anonymous Athenian men to which, however, he hurriedly adds that they were not

²³⁹ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 65.

actually “real” Athenian men but some “trouble-making excuses for men” worthless and foreign-made.²⁴⁰ Granted “this was trivial and strictly local,” continues the Dikaiopolean Beggar, the real trouble began when some drunken youths went to Megara and kidnapped a Megarian whore. In retaliation, the Megarians stole a couple of Aspasia’s whores. In turn, an enraged Pericles, acting in despotic manner imposed a punishing economic embargo on Megara, that turned the entire Greece upside down. The Dikaiopolean Beggar turns the serious into the comic and vice versa.

We begin with Aspasia and Simathea. Theirs is a simple iambic joke, but not without significance. At the dramatic level, the Dikaiopolean beggar is poking fun at Herodotus’ discussion of “woman-stealing” as the basis of the Trojan and Persian Wars (*Hist.* 1.1-4). The joke here becomes that these days it’s not princesses who inspire war, but “common prostitutes.”²⁴¹ In terms of Aspasia we know that she was a frequent target of the comic poets. Hermippos used to accuse her of procuring freeborn women and

²⁴⁰ The fact that no identities are given is strange. A main component of Old Comedy was that of personal attack and Aristophanes was a true practitioner in this respect and not one to shy away from “naming” names. Is it possible that one of those anonymous men was Nikarchos, a man named as an informant by Dikaiopolis at line 906? Taking into consideration that Nikarchos is an otherwise unknown person (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 171, n. 117) and the fact that Thucydides does not name anyone in his discussion of the Megarian decree (*Hist.* I.67) the identity of these so-called informants remains somewhat of an enigma. The argument that a law barring Megarian goods had been passed at earlier times when relations between Athens and Megara were strained (i.e., 466) but had become “a dead letter” only to be revised around 430 by some “malicious individuals” (Legon, *Megara*, 205-6) is one possibility that could help explain Dikaiopolis’ anonymous “men.”

²⁴¹ Antony Keen, review of *Aristophanes and Athens*, by Douglas MacDowell, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 96.04.10, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1996/96.04.10.html>

hetairai for Pericles' sexual pleasure, while Eupolis used to charge her with being a whore and mother to a bastard.²⁴² Needless to say these attacks were politically motivated and the real target was not Aspasia but her cohort Pericles.

In terms of Simathea, there is no consensus in the literature. Roland Legon disputes the possibility that Simathea was a historical figure,²⁴³ while Henderson asserts it. In particular, Henderson suggests that Simathea was Alcibiades' lover which, if true, would have added significantly to the caustic nature of Dikaiopolis' joke by implying that uncle and nephew alike were associated with sluts.²⁴⁴ This obvious slander on Alcibiades appears to stem from the fact that he held the promise of being every bit as charismatic as his uncle, Pericles, but with the added element of unbridled personal ambition and visions of military glory. While it was unclear whether Alcibiades would evolve into a moderate or radical war supporter, it was clear that Alcibiades was not in favour of peace. Considering Dikaiopolis' clear and unequivocal claim at the opening scene that he was going to "revile" all the war rhetoricians (38) it is not surprising that Aristophanes attacks Alcibiades. Put differently, in anti-war comedy, there is no mercy for warmongers.

We now turn our attention to Pericles, his Megarian Decree and its role in the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides tells us that Pericles gave a speech before the Assembly arguing that if Athens went to war with Sparta over Megara it would not have been over a trifling matter, implying in the process that the opposition was arguing exactly this point.

²⁴² Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 121, n. 70.

²⁴³ Legon, *Megara*, 205.

²⁴⁴ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights* 121, n. 69.

As a testament to his oratorical capacities, Pericles managed to transform the Megarian Decree into a symbol of Athenian determination by arguing that “whether the reason put forward is big or small, we are not in any case going to climb down nor hold our possessions under a constant thread of interference...it would be slavish to give in to them [Spartan demands] however big or small such claims may be” (Thuc.140-141). Steve Israel holds that this speech is important because it can be applied to “contemporary debates over war and peace.”²⁴⁵ True enough, however, one would hasten to add, more towards the debate in favour of war.

In terms of the Megarian embargo and its role in the outbreak of war, it should be said that its not a universally agreed upon topic. Ste. Croix argues that the Megarian Decree, contrary to Aristophanes “comic ramblings”, was not the cause of the Peloponnesian War. Crawford and Whitehead likewise argue that “the jokes made about the outbreak of war by Aristophanes and others have hopelessly contaminated the later tradition.”²⁴⁶ (The reference to “others” is doubtless to Cratinus and his comedy *Dionysalexandros*, which derides Pericles for “having brought the war upon Athens.”²⁴⁷)

Donald Kagan, on the other hand, argues that the Megarian Decree was an error in judgement on Pericles’ part. The economic embargo against Megara, writes Kagan, was intended to punish the Megarians for interfering in a fight between Corinth (a Spartan ally) and Corcyra,²⁴⁸ and to send a warning to other city-states to steer clear of this

²⁴⁵ Israel, *Charge!: History’s Greatest Military Speeches*, 9.

²⁴⁶ Crawford and Whitehead, *Archaic and Classical Greece: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*, 322.

²⁴⁷ Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 86.

²⁴⁸ Initially a neutral Dorian state that later became an Athenian ally.

particular conflict. Keeping in mind that Sparta was in firm control of her allies (meaning that Sparta could have restrained Megara herself), Pericles' action was unnecessary. The same decree, according to Kagan, also had the unintended effect of bolstering the influence of the Spartan war party because it gave the impression that Athens was attacking a Spartan ally without any provocation. Moreover, it reinforced the notion that Athens was acting in a tyrannical and aggressive manner. Had Pericles exercised a more prudent judgement, and had he been more tolerant with Megara, continues Kagan, King Archidamus and his peace party would have been able to keep their control of Sparta's foreign policy."²⁴⁹ Even at the eve of war, had Pericles rescinded at the request of the second Spartan embassy, the conflict could have been avoided. By that point, however, Pericles' thinking was dominated by thoughts of war strategy, and all the statesmen involved suffered from a "failure of imagination" similar to that exhibited by those prior to the start of WWI. In this respect, Kagan argues, the critics of Pericles were correct to attribute the outbreak of the war to the Megarian Decree and to see Pericles as the instigator²⁵⁰ (see also § 2.1). In the end, the Megarian Decree was a diplomatic failure.

Revisiting lines 535-38, which read, "Whereupon the Megarians, starving by degrees, asked the Lakedaimonians to bring about a reversal of the decree in response to the sluts; but we refused, though they asked us many times," it becomes obvious that this signals a shift in the "blame strategy." Up to this point Dikaiopolis had blamed some

²⁴⁹ Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, 352.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

anonymous Athenian informers (515-9), Simathea and Aspasia's prostitutes (526); and Pericles (530-4). Now, however, we see the Dikaiopolean Beggar ever so slyly assigning some of the blame to the Athenian voters for their repeated failure to retract the Megarian Decree. What is most interesting is Dikaiopolis' decision to share part of the blame himself by saying "we" rather than "you". What purpose does this self-incrimination serve? I would argue this is a precautionary measure on the part of Dikaiopolis to guard (once again) against audience-alienation given the political sensitivity of the subject.

Apart from that, Dikaiopolis' chastisement of the Athenian voters is also a testament to their democratic power (albeit a critical one). Given the nature of Athens radical democracy, this meant great power. This, in turn, makes Dikaiopolis' message something along the lines of: "With great power there must also come - great responsibility!"²⁵¹ To be precise, unlike citizens of non-democratic states, citizens of democratic regimes bear a greater share of responsibility for state policies. Consequently, it is as a result of this that I hesitate to embrace the claim that the "comic vantage point is essentially that of the ordinary citizen looking into the arena of civic power and faulting those who dominate it, while they themselves, as the Old Oligarch noted, are righteously spared."²⁵² For in this case, as we have just observed, ordinary citizens are *not* spared by Dikaiopolis.

Next, the Dikaiopolean Beggar appeals to his audience's reason. He argues that if Sparta had done to Athens what Athens did to Sparta then Athens' reaction would have

²⁵¹ Quote belongs to Stan Lee (née Stanley Lieber). It is spoken by the character of Peter Parker in his role as Spider-Man in the eponymous comic book series (I would like to thank Charles Blattberg for pointing this out).

²⁵² An argument made by Henderson, *The Acharnians/Knights*, 22.

been the same as that of the Spartans (556). The point of this assertion, I would claim, is to eradicate the popular belief that Athens was *unjustly* wronged. By removing this (false) perception of injustice, the soothing of the Acharnian *thymoeides* (i.e., spirited part of the soul) becomes easier. With the *thymoeides* pacified, the desire for revenge dissipates and so does the desire for war.²⁵³

To truly appreciate this dramatic stratagem on Aristophanes' part one must delve into the theoretical underpinnings of Plato's discussion of *thumos* in the *Republic*. Here, Socrates perceptively argues that one of the most potent agitators of the *thymoeides* is the perception of injustice (440d). In his tripartite division of the soul, with its *logistikon* (rational part), *thumeticon* (spirited part) and *epithemeton* (desiring part), Socrates suggests that one finds a natural alliance between *thumos* and reason in noble souls since *thumos* fights on the "side of reason in the pursuit of justice."²⁵⁴

With that utterance Dikaiopolis concludes his speech. He then does something quite strange: he kneels and lays his head on the chopping block. That is, he assumes that his speech was not persuasive and he will now die. (Of course there is also the probability that this gesture is part of an overall rhetorical act, constituting a physical rather than a verbal component). Be that as it may, Dikaiopolis waits silently for the reaction of the Acharnian Chorus, to whom we now turn our attention.

²⁵³ For this point I rely on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Book III, where he discusses the various methods by which men become calm. One of these is "... if they [men] feel that they themselves are in the wrong and are suffering justly (for anger is not excited by what is just), since men no longer think then that they are suffering without justification; and anger, as we have seen, means this" (1380b-1381).

²⁵⁴ Hutter, "Thumos and Psyche," 83.

4.2 A People Divided: The Split of the Acharnian Chorus 557-625

As the Dikaiopolean Beggar waits with his head on the chopping block an even stranger thing takes place. The Acharnian Chorus becomes divided; two semi-choruses are formed, each with a corresponding Chorus Leader. The first Chorus remains unmoved by Dikaiopolis' speech while the second Chorus is won over. Moreover, as the first chorus begins a menacing walk towards the kneeling figure, the second chorus sets out to protect Dikaiopolis.

Leader of the First Semi-Chorus: Is that true, you damned (*miarōtate*) scum of the earth? Do you, a beggar, dare say this of us, and scold us, if we had the odd informer? (559)

Leader of the Second Chorus: He does, by Poseidon, and what he says is just (*dikaia*), entirely, and at no point does he lie.

Leader of the First Chorus: Even so, was he the one to say it? He'll be sorry that he dared make this speech.

Leader of the Second Chorus: [*Addressing the first chorus*] Hey you, where are you running? Stop I say! Because if you hit this man, you'll be upended yourself, and quickly! (565)

[*The two choruses begin a physical tussle, at which point the first chorus begins yelling for reinforcements*]

Leader of the First Chorus: [*In tragi-comic diction*] O Lamachus, who looks lighting, appear and help us, you of the fearsome crest! O Lamachus, friend (*o phil'*) and fellow tribesman (*o phileta*)!²⁵⁵ Or if there is a taxiarch, or general, or wall-storming champion, let him come to our aid, anyone, and quickly! I'm caught in a waistlock (571).²⁵⁶

[*Lamachus appears in full panoply followed by soldiers*]²⁵⁷

Lamachus: Whence have I heard a martial shout? Whither must I charge? Where hurl the hullabaloo? Who's roused my Gorgon from her shield case? (574).

²⁵⁵ An apparent word play upon "friend" (*philos*) and "tribe" (*phyle*).

²⁵⁶ A common wrestling metaphor (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 185, n. 571).

²⁵⁷ Insofar as this scene is still firmly grounded in Euripides' *Telephus*, Lamachus is said to be the corresponding persona of Achilles (Henderson, *Acharnians*, 124, n. 73).

It would seem that Dikaiopolis undermined the effectiveness of his speech; After all, he actually managed to persuade half of the Acharnian Chorus. Of course it would have been best if his speech had managed to convince everyone, but failing that, half is better than nothing. Strauss calls the conversion of half of the Chorus a “resounding success” and writes that:

...it matters little that the other half is angrier than ever (his having said just things against the city makes matters not better but worse for him); for treason ceases to be treason when the city splits into two: Dikaiopolis now has powerful defenders; the Acharnians still opposed to him must now kill the other Acharnians before they can kill him. By successfully withstanding the first assault of what is in fact an alliance, he enables himself to split the alliance. The Acharnians, whom he failed to persuade but who are now seriously threatened, call Lamachus, the war spirit incarnate, to their help.²⁵⁸

From a historical perspective one could say that Aristophanes is putting Athens on the stage. The Athenian audience end up observing themselves through a glass darkly. The first Chorus, no doubt, stood for the war party, while the second Chorus stood for the peace party. The first Chorus seeing that they were loosing the struggle begin shouting for Lamachus, the Great-Battler, an actual historical figure who belonged to the same *phyle* as the Acharnians, the Oë, making their cry all the more forceful.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 66.

²⁵⁹ Most authors translated *phyle* as deme, which, apart from questions of accuracy (i.e., were *phyles* really the same as demes?), obscures the significance of the Acharnians' cry: *ō phil'*, *ō phileta!* (568), that is, the First Acharnian Chorus was appealing to Lamachus as a fellow phyle member whereby *phyle* seems to dictate a more intimated level of identity-alliance than that of a fellow-deme man.

In terms of Lamachus, when the *Acharnians* was written he was known more for his military courage than for his intellectual powers.²⁶⁰ In subsequent years, however, it became clear that Lamachus was no warmonger. According to Thucydides, Lamachus fought courageously on many occasions. He was one of the men who took an oath for the Peace of Nicias in 421 BC, and died during the Sicilian expedition. To be sure, after Lamachus' death Aristophanes treated Lamachus with respect in subsequent plays.²⁶¹ In 425 Bc, however, Lamachus was portrayed as a poor, zealous warrior with a name whose etymology rendered him the perfect subject for the *Miles Gloriosus* prototype that Aristophanes concocts for this play.

After the Dikaiopolean Beggar realizes that he is not going to be executed and can now rely on the second Chorus for protection, he addresses Lamachus in mock admiration.

Dikaiopolis: ὦ Lamachus! Hero of the crests (*tōn lophon*) and ambushades (*tōn lohon*)! (575).

Recognizing the ironic overtones of Dikaiopolis' greeting and fearing that their champion will fall prey to flattery, the leader of the first Chorus address Lamachus with the words:

Leader of the First Chorus: Lamachus, don't you realize that this man has long been spewing slander (*kakorrothei*) at our whole city? (576-7)

Needless to say this accusation is in reference not only to Dikaiopolis but more importantly to Aristophanes for his previous play *The Babylonians*. Lamachus turns to the Dikaiopolean Beggar, and demands an explanation.

²⁶⁰ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 184, n. 566.

²⁶¹ For example in the *Women of the Thesmophoria* (8410 and the *Frogs* (1039) (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 484, n. 566).

Lamachus: You there! Do you dare, beggar as you are, to say such things?

Dikaiopolis: Lamachus, hero, please be merciful if, beggar that I am, I spoke and prattled some.

Lamachus: What did you say about me? Speak up!

Dikaiopolis: I'm not certain yet; the terror of your armour makes me dizzy [*Pointing at the Gorgon on Lamachus' shield*]. Please, take that scare-face (*mormona*) away from me! (580)

Lamachus: There [*reversing his shield hiding the Gorgon's face*].

Dikaiopolis: Now lay it upside down in front of me.

Lamachus: There it lies.

Dikaiopolis: Now hand me that plume from your helmet.

Lamachus: Here's a tuft for you.²⁶²

Dikaiopolis: Now take hold of my head, so I can puke (585). I'm sickened by your crests!

Lamachus: Hey there, what are you up to? You'd use my tuft to puke with?

Dikaiopolis: This tuft here? Tell me, what sort of bird is it from? Perhaps the roaring boastard?²⁶³

Lamachus: Oh! Now you're doomed!

Dikaiopolis: Not at all, Lamachus! (590) It's not a matter of strength - thought if you're really strong, why not peel back my foreskin? You're well enough armed!

Lamachus: Do you a beggar say this to a general?

Dikaiopolis: [*With indignation*] Me, a beggar?

Lamachus: Well what are you then?

Dikaiopolis: What am I? A solid citizen, (*politēs chrēstos*), not a Mr. Placehunter (*spoudarhides*), but ever since the war began, a Mr. Trooper (*stratōnides*); while you ever since the war began have been a Mr. Highpay (*mistharhides*)! (597)

Lamachus: They did elect me.

Dikaiopolis: Three cuckoos did! That's why I was sickened and poured a truce, when I saw grey-haired men in the ranks, and lads like you arrantly malingering, some drawing three drachmas' pay on the Thracian coast - Teisamenus Phaenippus, Scoundrel-

²⁶² Compare this with another drama, the *Symposium*, where the Platonic Aristophanes, after being afflicted with hiccups, is instructed by the physician Eryximachus (Belch-Fighter) to tickle his nose (185e).

²⁶³ Imaginary bird-name and a slang of the verb *kompōlākein* meaning to "indulge in empty talk, meaning, that Lamachus is a mere braggard with no substance (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 185, n. 589).

Hipparchides-others with Chares, other among the Chaonians²⁶⁴ – Geres – Theodorus, Humbug from Diomeia – still others in Camarina and Gela²⁶⁵ and Catagela.

Lamachus: They did get elected.

Dikaiopolis: But how come you're all drawing pay somewhere or other, while none of these people ever does? [*To members of the Chorus*] Say, Marilades, have you ever served on an embassy, though you're a greybeard of long standing? (610) He shakes his head; and yet he's solid and hard-working. And what about Anthracyllus and Euphorides and Prinides? Has any of you ever seen Ecbatana or the Chaonians? They say they haven't. But the son of Coisyra and Lamachus have, though just the other day, on account of dues and debts, (615) all their friends were advising them to stand back, like people dumping their evening washwater.

Lamachus: Oh, Democracy! Will such talk be tolerated?

Dikaiopolis: No indeed, unless Lamachus draws his pay!

Lamachus: Be that as it may, I for one will ever make war on all the Peloponnesians, (620) and everywhere harass them, with ships and footsoldiers, with all my might.

Dikaiopolis: And I announce to all Peloponnesians, Megarians, and Boetians that they may trade in my marketplace, but not Lamachus. (625)

[*Dikaiopolis and Lamachus with his soldiers exit*]

Despite the warning from his *philous* and *philetas*, Lamachus' *alazoneia* blinds him to flattery.²⁶⁶ The fact that the Great Battler believes that his armour is so frightening as to

²⁶⁴ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 131, n.75, writes that the Chaonians, a "warlike people of Epirus" (north-western Greece), is used here to pun on chaos "void" or *chaskein* "gape."

²⁶⁵ Camarina and Gela were Sicilian towns and Athenian forces were at this time in Sicily in support of Camarina against Gela (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 187, n. 606). In addition, Henderson, *Acharnians*, 131, n. 75) and Sommerstein alike point out that the name Gela which suggests *gelōs* 'laughter' is used here as a pun on the fictional place "Gatagela" a comic coinage suggesting *katagelos* "derision" or "ridiculous". Also, it should be of interest to note Aristophanes' utterance in Plato's *Symposium*, "My fear is not so much of saying something absurd (*geloia*) - since that would be all to the good and native to my Muse as saying something utterly ridiculous (*katagelasta*)" (189b).

²⁶⁶ Recall the fable of "The Fox and the Crow." When a hungry fox sees a crow with a piece of cheese on its beak sitting on a tree branch she begins to flatter the crow from the base of the tree calling it beautiful and "the king of birds" before asking the crow to sing. When the crow, flattered by the fox, opens its mouth, the cheese falls and is devoured by the cunning fox. So too with Dikaiopolis and Lamachus.

render someone mute is a testament to his inflated military ego. The Dikaiopolean Beggar disarms The Great-Battler, both literally and figuratively, with the use of Aesopean flattery. The claim by Dikaiopolis that Lamachus' arms terrify him is undermined by his reference to Gorgon as a "*mormona*." A *mormona* stood for the monster Mormo that mothers and nurses used to invoke in order to frighten the children. By using this nursery name, the argument goes, the Dikaiopolean Beggar was disparaging Lamachus' martial emblem.²⁶⁷ True enough, however, the head of a gorgon was not *only* Lamachus' martial emblem; it was a Greek martial emblem. From this perspective, the Dikaiopolean Beggar is in reality disparaging a national martial emblem. This is further evidence that Dikaiopolis is hostile to the very spirit of war.

After the Dikaiopolean Beggar manages to get Lamachus to lower his shield, and therefore his defence, he asks for a plume from the helmet, which an unsuspecting Lamachus foolishly provides. The Dikaiopolean Beggar uses the plume to induce vomiting because, according to him, the sight of Lamachus' crests sickens him. Put otherwise, Dikaiopolis is not cowed or intimidated by the image of great height – the crests' intentioned aim.

Dikaiopolis uses the verb *bleluttomai* to indicate his nausea (586).²⁶⁸ David Konstan argues that this verb is used for the most part to indicate *loathing* and falls under the emotion of hate.²⁶⁹ Related terms such as *bdeluros* (loathsome), argues the same author, were commonly used by the comic poets, with the most famous example being the

²⁶⁷ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 185, n. 582.

²⁶⁸ Sommerstein translates this as: "Your crests just turn my stomach" and Henderson as: "I'm sickened by your crests!"

²⁶⁹ Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks*, 198-9.

character of Bdelycleon (Cleon-Loather) in Aristophanes' *Wasps*. (One also finds the same term used multiple times in Hippocratic writings in connection with nausea). All in all, there is said to be an affinity between the verb *blehuttomai* and repugnance/revulsion. Based on the above, it would be safe to conclude that Dikaiopolis finds the panoply of the warrior repugnant. Lamachus' outrage at the misuse of his plume (to say nothing about his shield) is understandable. The Dikaiopolean Beggar takes two highly esteemed martial symbols and proceeds to their deliberate devaluation and dishonouring. Considering the esteemed place that the armour of a warrior held in Greek culture, Dikaiopolis' action of using the shield as a vomit-bowl borders on sacrilege.²⁷⁰

Lamachus is indignant that a beggar would dare show such a level of disrespect towards his weapons. Lamachus' indignation is equal to that of Agamemnon, his tragic equivalent in Euripides' *Telephus*. However, the disrespect shown towards the warriors' armour pales in comparison to the disrespect that the tragic beggar reserves for the warrior himself by the use of insulting language. How insulting? Turning to Sommerstein,

²⁷⁰ The main purpose of the shield and the helmet was to protect its wearer from wounds. A helmet was usually adorned with a horse-hair crest referred to as *lophos* - the same word used by Dikaiopolis (575). The purpose of the helmet's *lophos* was aesthetic as well psychological. In terms of the latter, the *lophos* gave the dramatic appearance of greater height in an effort to intimidate one's opponent. In terms of the phalanx formation the shield in addition to protecting its holder was also designed to protect the right-side of the warrior next in line. When hoplites dropped their shields and ran in fear they not only exposed themselves to danger, but also their fellow hoplites. It was in this sense that shield-throwing, as opposed to helmet-throwing, was punishable by death in Sparta, for the latter only exposed the wearer to danger while the former exposed the collective body (on this theme see Cartledge, "Hoplites and Heroes," 11-27).

we learn that the word *apepshōlissas* meant either “circumcise me” or “cause my foreskin to retract, excite me sexually”, two equally insulting suggestions.²⁷¹

Lamachus, similar to Agamemnon, demands to know how a beggar dares to speak as such to a general (593). Dikaiopolis answers that he is not a beggar, or more correctly, having achieved his goal of disarming and thereby ridiculing the warrior he no longer wears the mask of the beggar. When Lamachus demands to know his true identity Dikaiopolis answers that he is a *politēs chrēstos*; that is, a “decent”²⁷²; a “solid”²⁷³; a “good”²⁷⁴; “useful”²⁷⁵ citizen (595). Commenting on lines 572-97, Stephen Halliwell writes:

The first audience of *Acharnians* contained a large number of citizen soldiers, and it was Aristophanes’s aim in debasing a well-known General to appeal to their suppressed feelings of cynicism towards their leaders: the festival experience of release from normal inhibitions has a special force where escape from rigorous military discipline is concerned...The blend of hyperbole and fantastic burlesque in the ridicule of Lamachus means that we can hardly expect to be able to reduce the treatment of him to the terms of sober or serious criticism...²⁷⁶

Halliwell’s interpretation rests on the so-called “Bakhtinian” interpretation. According to this line of thought the festival was a time when the comic playwrights gave uninhibited expression” to “generalized cynicism about military leaders.”²⁷⁷ However, what Halliwell

²⁷¹ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 185, n. 592.

²⁷² Sommerstein’s translation.

²⁷³ Henderson’s translation.

²⁷⁴ Nussbaum’s translation, “The Comic Soul: Or, This Phallus That Is Not One,” 172.

²⁷⁵ My translation.

²⁷⁶ Halliwell, “Aristophanic Satire,” 10.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 12.

describes as “cynicism” Strauss, commenting on the same lines, describes as “resentment.”²⁷⁸ The difference between cynicism and resentment is that whereas the former signifies distrust the latter is an emotion. For philosopher Robert Solomon, resentment is one of the “nastier emotions” but it is also the most clever and the most “philosophical of emotions”, which at the heart of its philosophy lies one key ingredient of our sense of justice.²⁷⁹ For this author, resentment is the soil that nurtures revolutionaries since those who feel resentment recognize the element of injustice and seek to remove it. In the end, it is this specific element, the unsettling or revolutionary aspect of resentment, that prevents me from embracing wholeheartedly the “Bakhtinian interpretations” of the *Acharnians*. Why? Because escapism, or the release of negative energy, does *not* nurture revolutionary elements. On the contrary. Dikaiopolis *must* persuade the first Chorus to abandon the Great-Battler, much the same way that Aristophanes attempts to persuade the historical Acharnian men to abandon the war party. It is with this goal in mind that the seeds of resentment are sown here.

This brings us to the question of how much of this resentment was real and how much imaginary; after all, a persuasive rhetorician should be capable of convincing an audience of *real* as well as *imaginary* resentments. The seeds of resentment sown by Dikaiopolis appear to be real in the *wider* framework. To explain, while we lack detailed information about which individual(s) profited and/or held paid offices during the war, the Acharnian people, as a segment of the population, were disproportionately affected. During the invasion season (i.e., summer) they had to abandon their houses and their

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 67. A sentiment also shared by Sommerstein: “...Dicaeopolis is here trying to arouse resentment” (*Acharnians*, 186, n. 601).

²⁷⁹ Solomon, *A Passion for Justice: Emotions and the Origins of the Social Contract*, 261.

lands and take refuge in an overcrowded city. This meant the loss of their summer crops, including all grains, their vineyards and, if burning were involved, the loss of their olive groves as well. In other words, the loss of bread, wine and oil, the three major food staples in ancient Greece. In addition, while the Acharnian men constituted the majority of hoplites in the Athenian army, Athens did not rely on hoplites for her defence; rather, she relied on her long walls. As for her mighty navy, Athens relied on sailors, and the Acharnian men were no sailors.²⁸⁰

Lamachus' defence that he was legitimately elected is dismissed with Dikaiopolis' sarcastic reply: "Three cuckoos did!" Surprisingly, this is quite a weak response on Dikaiopolis' part. After all, a poorly attended Assembly is an Assembly nonetheless, and a democracy is still a democracy irrespective of voter turnout.²⁸¹ Strauss is of the mind that Dikaiopolis realizes the inherently stronger position of Lamachus' argument and therefore avoids the topic by diverting the audiences' attention towards the financial inequalities of the war, something which in turn manages to persuade the first Chorus over to his side. Or, in his words,

When he [Dikaiopolis] suggests that he made his private peace not because of Athens' war guilt but because of his indignation over the privileges enjoyed by these war profiteers...all Acharnians come over to his side... The justice of the war remains controversial; the unjust distribution of the burdens of the war is an unbeatable argument: Even those Acharnians who, out of hatred of the Spartans or simple

²⁸⁰ Recall Dikaiopolis' remark during his confrontation of the Thracian mercenaries that the ship-rowers were the saviours of the city, *sōsipolis* (162-63).

²⁸¹ Although a few objections could be raised about its quality and legitimacy.

patriotism, could not bear to hear of Athens' war guilt, are won over by their appeal to their envy.²⁸²

This is not to say that Dikaiopolis discards his original assertion. Rather, it is to say that this is Dikaiopolis' way of saying that he recognizes the limits of altruistic appeals. Claiming: "Make peace with the enemy because we were partially to blame" is unselfish and fails to appeal to the egotistical component of human nature,²⁸³ which would prefer hearing instead something like: "Make peace with your enemy because it is to your economic advantage."²⁸⁴

Before moving on, a small comment about the "son of Coisyra," (614) who is mentioned by Dikaiopolis as a war-profiteer, is in order. Who was he, and what (if any) role does his name serve in the *Acharnians*? Ancient scholars identify Coisyra as an Eretrian woman who was noted for, among other things, her arrogance, her flamboyant wealth, her marriage into the aristocratic Alcmeonid genos, and her claim that she was descended from Zeus. She had a son, Megacles, presumably of the deme Alocepe and therefore a relative of Pericles and Alcibiades.²⁸⁵ The fact that Megacles is identified via

²⁸² Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 67.

²⁸³ Assuming of course that there is such a thing as "human nature" consisting of various "components".

²⁸⁴ In the case of Canada's involvement in the Afghanistan War, this would mean that in addition to appealing to altruistic sentiments surrounding POW treatment and the suffering of innocent Afghani civilians, one could point out that the costs of the Afghanistan War is a staggering \$18.1 billion, namely, \$1,500 for every Canadian household (Clark Campbell, 'Afghan mission's spiralling cost hits campaign,' *The Globe and Mail*, October 9, 2008), appealing as it may, to Canadian economic well-being rather than some abstract human rights for "some people who live in a far away land" (Thuc. 1.81).

²⁸⁵ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 187, n. 614.

his non-Athenian mother,²⁸⁶ carries a negative connotation which, when taken together with Coisyra's claim that she was descended from Zeus, reminds one of another Alcmeonid, Pericles the "Olympian" (530).

²⁸⁶ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 133, n. 78.

4.3 Aristophanes' Apology & Thucydides' Defence: Lines 626-718

During the parabasis all the actors would exit the stage leaving the Chorus and the Chorus Leader to address the audience. The Chorus Leader, who usually served as the mouthpiece of the playwright,²⁸⁷ would speak to the audience about various issues while at the same time engaging in extravagant praise on behalf of the poet. Criticism, followed by advise-giving, was a regular feature of the parabasis.

The parabasis of the *Acharnians* is composed of two discernible parts. The first (626-64) contains a speech by the Chorus Leader that defends Aristophanes against the charge of slandering Athens while also praising him for his didactic courage. The second deals with the maltreatment of old men in the law courts. While seemingly separate subjects the two speeches are in fact related to each other²⁸⁸ and are an integral part of the play's overall action²⁸⁹ (more on this shortly). It should be said that the parabasis is spoken by a *single* Chorus Leader following the reconciliation and reunification of the Acharnian Chorus,

Chorus Leader: That man won the debate, and he's changed the people's mind (*metapeithe*) about the truce (626). Now let's doff our cloaks and essay the anapests. [*The Chorus remove their cloaks as they are about to engage in dancing*]²⁹⁰ Never yet,

²⁸⁷ Scholars that disagree with this assertion include: Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero*, 22, and Harriot, "Aristophanes, Poet and Dramatist," 25.

²⁸⁸ On this point see Bowie, "The Parabasis in Aristophanes: Prolegomena, *Acharnians*," 29-30.

²⁸⁹ See Jacqueline de Romilly, *A Short History of Greek Literature*, 85.

²⁹⁰ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 188, n. 627.

since our producer (*didaskalos*) first directed *trugikoīs*²⁹¹ Choruses, has he come forward to tell the audience he is intelligent (*dexios estin*). But since he has been accused by his enemies before Athenians quick to make up their minds (630), as one who makes comedy (*kōmōdei*) of our city and outrages (*kathubrizei*) the people, he now asks to defend himself before Athenians just as quick to change their minds. Our poet says that he deserves many rewards (*agathōn*) from you, since he has stopped you from being deceived overmuch by foreigners' speeches, from being cajoled by flattery, from being citizens of Simpletonia (635). Before he did that, the ambassadors from the allied states who meant to deceive you would start by calling you "violet-crowned"; and when anyone said that, those "crowns" would promptly have you sitting on the tips of your little buttocks. And if anyone fawned on you by calling Athens "gleaming," that "gleaming" would get him everything, just for tagging you with an honour fit only for sardines (640). For this he's the source of rich benefits for you, and also for showing how the peoples of the allied states were "democratically" governed. That's why the allied emissaries who bring you their tribute will henceforth come: they'll be eager to lay eyes on this outstanding (*ariston*) poet who took the risk to tell the Athenians about justice (*ta dikaia*) (645). So far has the renown of his boldness already spread that even the King, in questioning the envoys from Sparta, asked them first which side was stronger in ships, and then which side this poet profusely abused (*kaka polla*); because these folks, he said, have become far better and far likelier to win the war, with him as an adviser (650).²⁹² And therefore the Spartans offer you peace and ask for the return of Aegina; not that they care about that island, but so that they can take away this poet. But listen, don't you ever let him go, for he'll keep on making comedy (*komodesei*) of what's right (*ta dikaia*) (655).²⁹³ He promises to give you plenty of fine teachings (*polla didaxein agatha*), so that you'll enjoy good fortune, and not to flatter or dangle bribes or bamboozle you, nor playing any knavish tricks (*oude panourgōn*) or butter you up, but to give you only the best of instruction (*didaskōn*). That said, let Cleon hatch his plots and built his traps against me to his utmost (660), for Good and Justice (*dikaion*) will be my allies, and never will I be caught behaving towards the city as he does, a coward and a punk-arse (664).

In deciphering the above, we could say that the Chorus Leader (aka Aristophanes) begins the speech in a defensive mode and finishes in an offensive mode. His defensive mode

²⁹¹ Both Sommerstein and Henderson render this word as "comic" in their respective translation. I have retained the original word "*trugikoīs*" in order to convey the word's ambiguity.

²⁹² I.e., win the war by signing the peace treaty.

²⁹³ Sommerstein: "for in his comedies he'll say what's right"; Henderson: "for he'll keep on making comedy of what's right". Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 69, commenting on this line writes: "he treats the just things comically."

consists of rebuking past charges on account of his *Babylonians*, namely, making fun of Athens and of slandering the demos. The offensive mode begins the moment that the Chorus Leader claims that (1) Aristophanes is an excellent poet, *poieten ton ariston*,²⁹⁴ (2) deserves rich rewards for educating, and thus preventing the Athenians from falling prey to foreign flattery, and for politically enlightening Athens on how the peoples of the allied states were “democratically” governed,²⁹⁵ (3) with him as an adviser, the Athenians will win the war, because he will continue treating the just things comically; and (4) Aristophanes, unlike Cleon, will never act cowardly towards the city.²⁹⁶

In terms of dramatic structure, Hubbard argues that Aristophanes is implicitly identified, via a series of “thematic and verbal links” with his protagonist in the various parabases.²⁹⁷ This helps to explain Dikaiopolis’ similar struggles to Aristophanes. Even more important is Hubbard’s central thesis that the parabases are fundamentally intertextual in nature, acquiring their full meaning only in relation to Aristophanes’ other works (i.e., *Babylonians*), including the comedy in which it occurs. In other words, the parabasis is intrinsically connected to the *Acharnians*’ theme, issue, and characters by “many finely spun threads of language, imagery, political reference, and ideology.”²⁹⁸ Under this interpretation the utterances by the Chorus and the Chorus Leader respectively

²⁹⁴ Notice the word-play between *ariston* and *Aristophanes*.

²⁹⁵ Vague reference, possible to the *Babylonians*, referring either to “misadministration by the Athenians or by the democratic regimes in the allied states, or both” (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 135, n. 83).

²⁹⁶ Plato’s *Apology* utilizes the same argumentative structure. For example, Socrates claims that for his valuable services to Athens he deserves rewards rather than punishment (30e).

²⁹⁷ Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis*, 30.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

are not only intrinsically connected to the overall theme but also the advancement of the play. On the same topic but from a different angle, Simon Goldhill argues that this passage typifies the fact that the comic poets saw themselves as the “educators of the citizens.” The same author also argues that the Chorus Leader is in addition defending the right of the comic poets to free and scurrilous speech, namely, the “opportunity and licence to speak out freely in the democracy.”²⁹⁹ To this comment we can only add that the Chorus Leader is not only asserting the right of Old Comedy to speak freely “in the democracy” but also *about* democracy. More than that, the Chorus Leader is suggesting that Old Comedy poets are themselves democratic actors.

²⁹⁹ Goldhill, “The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology,” 103.

4.3.1. Incantational Music Song and Dance in the *Acharnians*

Prior to continuing our analysis with the rest of the parabasis, a word on the choreographical movements of the Chorus and the structure of their songs. Lines 626-64 are composed in anapestic style, that is to say, a metrical foot consisting of two short syllables followed by one long syllable. Our earliest evidence of anapests is in early Spartan marching songs.³⁰⁰ This indicates that the anapestic style was especially suited as a martial or military rhythm.³⁰¹ What follows after the anapest is the *ode* (665-75) which is sang by the Chorus. Following the *ode* we have the *epirrhema* (676-91) spoken by the Chorus Leader; followed by the *antode* (692-702) which is once again sang by the Chorus; and finally the *antepirrhema* (703-18) spoken by the Chorus Leader, which marks the end of the parabasis.³⁰² Hence, in summary form we have: (i) *anapaest*, (ii) *ode*, (iii) *epirrhema*, (iv) *antode*, and (v) *antepirrhema*.

In terms of definition, the *ode* is a form of stately and ornate lyrical verse and typically consists of three parts: (a) *strophe*, (b) *antistrophe* and (c) *epode*. The *strophe* indicates a turn or a twist and is sung by the Chorus as they dance from east to west across the stage; the *antistrophe* (indicative of its name) is in response to the *strophe* and is a counter-turning, namely, a movement from west to east; while the *epode* (*epōidos* =

³⁰⁰ Merriam-Webster's Encyclopaedia of Literature, 47.

³⁰¹ For more on the subject of military music, and in particular the anapestic marching songs of the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, see Thomas J. Mathiesen, *Apollo's Lyre: Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 154-5.

³⁰² Harsh, "The Position of the Parabasis in the Plays of Aristophanes," 183.

epi + aidein, to sing after) follows the *strophe* and *anti-strophe*. The *epirrhema* is spoken by the Chorus Leader and it usually addresses a civic issue. The *antode*, or “opposite song”, is a metrical ode that is delivered during the intermission by the Chorus and is an affirmation or an answer given to a previous song by the Chorus Leader. The *antode* insofar as it involves a response to the ode, resembles the internal relationship between *strophe* and *antistrophe*. If this is the case, then we are faced with two counter-turning movements: one at the macro level (i.e., *ode & antode*) and one at the micro level (i.e., inside the ode, *strophe & antistrophe*); the same appears to be the case with *epirrhema* and the *antepirrhema*.³⁰³

Why all this painstaking detail and enumeration? To begin, we must not forget that Aristophanes’ muse was primarily a Poetic Muse. While it is true that Aristophanes often ventured into foreign “gardens” to pilfer other author’s “flowers,” we cannot read his texts in the same manner as we would read a Herodotean or Hesiodic text. In addition to the written word, Aristophanes engaged in the making of music and dance, in particular, of *ritualistic* Dionysiac music and dance. While I find myself in agreement with Sommerstein’s complain that it is unfortunate we know so little about the Chorus’ dance movements during the ode,³⁰⁴ I am confident that we can still sketch out a rough outline about the general purpose of these dance movements and songs.

With that in mind we turn our attention to the *epode*. The *epode* is the Latinised version of the Hellenic *epōidos*. Since not much exists about the nature of *epōidos* in the literature of Old Comedy, we turn by necessity to the genres of tragedy and philosophy.

³⁰³ See Sewell, *In the Theatre of Dionysos: Democracy and Tragedy in Ancient Athens*, 18-9.

³⁰⁴ Sommerstein, *Lysistrata and Other Plays*, xxix.

In Euripides' tragedy *Hippolytus* we read, "is he not an *epōidos*, this man, and a *goēs*, so sure that by his easy temper he will master my spirit?" (1038-40). Here *epōidos* is identified with incantation and indeed many modern commentators use the terms "incantation" and "trance" interchangeably for *epōidos*.³⁰⁵

Insofar as the ancients saw incantations as having magical connotations,³⁰⁶ it would be safe to infer that the ritualistic dance movements of the *epōidos* sought to "enchant" the audience.³⁰⁷ It is also safe to infer that the music, dance and song of the *ode-antode* was trance-like in nature and thereby an expression of a mythical form of creativity.³⁰⁸

But what sort of enchanting incantations and for what purpose one may ask? The answer to this question, I would argue, lies with Plato. It would seem that the joy with which Aristophanes plundered the gardens of others is equivalent only to the joy with which Plato plundered the garden of Aristophanes. In one of his plagiarizing excursions Plato came across a flower in Aristophanes' garden that blossomed only under Dionysian

³⁰⁵ The only differentiation insisted upon is that *epōidos* is not to be confused with *mania* or possession.

Whereby *epōidos* "works from an interior divining power" *mania* is said to work "through possession by the god" (see Robert McGahey, *The Orphic Moment: Shaman to Poet-thinker in Plato, Nietzsche, and Mallarme* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 153, n. 29.)

³⁰⁶ Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession*, 187.

³⁰⁷ For the association between *epoidos* and magic consider the (rare) witchcraft trial of Theoris of Lemnos who was prosecuted in Athens around 338 for allegedly "casting incantations (*epoidai*) and using harmful drugs (*pharmaka*)" (see, Derek Collins, "The Trial of Theoris of Lemnos: A 4th Century Witch or Folk Healer?" *Western Folklore* 59, 3/4 (2000), 251).

³⁰⁸ Notice Nietzsche's own incantational attempts in *BGE* in the section entitled: "From High Mountains: Epode."

moonlight. In the *Republic* (601b) Plato's Socrates describes how words when spoken in "metre, rhythm and harmony" exercise a spell over the audience, going so far as to compare them to musical colourings (*mousikēs hrōmatōn*). More importantly, in the *Laws* one stumbles upon a *philosophical epode*. The philosophical *epode* is described as a blocking mechanism to the influence of magic, with magic understood here as the utilization of emotions to overcome reason. Hence, the philosophical *epode* is seen as magic as well, but magic in the *service* of reason; a handmaiden to philosophy. Or as Elizabeth Belfiore aptly puts it:

...in contrast to the *elenchus* which is dangerous for young people...the *epode* is useful in the training of children who cannot yet reason...the musical training of young people is said to provide an *epode* for the soul so that it will feel pleasure, pain, love and hate in concord with reason and law, before it is able to reason...the emotional effect of *repetition* is the effective ingredient of the charm...³⁰⁹

Put differently, Plato recognizes and appreciates the dangers *and* benefits of this night flower. In the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates assert that, if the friends of poetry (*philopoiētai*) wish to return poetry to Kallipolis justly (*dikaia*), seeing that she is indeed magical, they must first plead her case in prose without metre, and show that she is not only delightful (*ēdeīa*) but beneficial to the republic and to human life (*vion ton anthrōpinon*) (607d).

We now turn to the second part of the parabasis consisting of the *ode/antode* and the *epirrhema/antepirrhema*. As a reminder, the *ode/antode* is sung by the Chorus and the *epirrhema/antepirrhema* is spoken by the Chorus Leader.

Chorus: Come this way, refulgent Muse,

³⁰⁹ Belfiore, "Elenchus, Epode, and Magic: Socrates as Silenus," 134-5.

wearing the force of fire (666),
ardent, Acharnian!
Even as a spark that from oaken embers
leaps aloft, excited
by a fan's fair wind (670),
when the herring
are lying there ready,
and some are mixing the Thasian sauce with its gleaming fillet,³¹⁰
and others are kneading the dough: so
come, bringing with you a tempestuous,
a well-tuned, a countrified song,
to me, your fellow demesman (675).

Chorus Leader: We old men, the elderly, have a complain against the city. The care we receive from you in our old age is unworthy of the sea battles we've fought; in fact you treat us terribly. You throw aged men into lawsuits and let them be the sport of stripping speechmakers (680), old men who are finished, soundless and played out, men whose Poseidon Unflattering is but their walking stick. We stand by the stone mumbling in our dotage, seeing nothing in our case but a blur.³¹¹ And the young man, who's cut a deal to plead against the old man (685), quickly throws a hold on him and hits him with hard-ball phrases; then he drags him up for questioning, sets verbal pitfalls, harries and flusters and confounds a Tithonus of a man.³¹² And in his decrepitude he gums his reply, and leaves the court convicted. Then he wails and weeps and says to his friends, (690) 'The money meant to buy my coffin I end up owing in fines!'

Chorus: How can that be fair?
To ruin a man old and grey,
hard by the water clock,
a man who's toiled at your side
and wiped off warm manly sweat, (695)
and lots of it,
when he was a brave fighter
at Marathon, in the city's cause?
What's more,
when we were at Marathon we chased the enemy;
but now we're being chased hard
by bad (*ponerōn*) people (700),
and getting bagged as well.

³¹⁰ A small fish called sprat, very similar to sardines.

³¹¹ Sommerstein: "seeing nothing but the gloom of justice."

³¹² Thitonus, we are told, was the mortal husband of the immortal goddess Dawn. When he asked Zeus for immortality he forgot to also ask for agelessness, as a result he withered away to a mere squeaking voice. In ancient times Thitonus' name was synonymous with senility (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 191, n. 688; Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 141, n. 87).

What Marpsias will try to disprove it?³¹³

Chorus Leader: Yes, how can it be fair that a stooped man of Thucydides' age should be destroyed in the grip of that Scythian wilderness, this man here, Cephsisodemus' son, the prattling advocate? (705) I for one felt pity and wiped away a tear at the sight of an old gentleman being confounded by a bowman. By Demeter, when Thucydides was himself, he wouldn't lightly have brooked Artachaees himself, but would have first outwrestled ten Euathluses, (710) outshouted with a roar three hundred bowmen, and shot circles round the kinsmen of the advocate's father. But since you won't allow the old men to get a moment's sleep, at least decree that their cases be separate; then an old man's prosecutor would be old and toothless, and the young men's would be the wide-arse, prattling son of Cleinias (715). From now on you should banish elderly defendants by using elderly persecutors, and youths by using youths.

Let us start by saying that the *ode* sang by the Chorus has all the markings of an incantation. It begins by an inviting prayer to a Muse (665). Since this is an Acharnian Chorus, naturally, the muse invoked is an Acharnian Muse.³¹⁴ By the same token, since the major industry of the Acharnians was coal-making, the enticing language for this Muse is related to the coal-making trade. Poetic words such as "fire" (*pyros*), and "oaken embers" (*anthrakon prininōn*) are utilized while incantational phrases such as "Muse of flame", "power of fire",³¹⁵ and sparks roused by "fair winds", conjure up a passionate

³¹³ Marpsias, whose name means gripper, or grappler, is in all likelihood a nickname or a generic name for litigators, due to its rarity. Ancient scholia identify a Marpsias as someone who was satirized in comedy as "a quarrelsome and noisy orator who talked much nonsense" and as flattering parasite of the wealthy Callias (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 191, n.702; Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 142, n. 89).

³¹⁴ As Sommerstein (*Acharnians*, 190, n. 665) points out each Chorus usually invokes a Muse peculiar to their nature, hence, in *The Birds* (737-9) the Chorus invokes a "many-hued Muse of the thickets."

³¹⁵ Sommerstein's translation.

spirit. Lines 670-75, on the other hand, shift the focus towards a more calming focal point, food (to be exact: pickled Thasian sprats [sardine-like fish] and bread).³¹⁶

Having established the incantational nature of the *ode* and *antode* respectively, we now turn away from this “delightful” metre and turn our attention to the speech by the Chorus Leader which contains the target of the *ode* in order to determine if what is said is “beneficial to the republic and to human life”. The Chorus Leader begins, similar to Dikaiopolis in the Assembly (1-5), with a complaint; he protests the unfair treatment of old men in the laws courts. Old men, the Chorus Leader claims, insofar as they find themselves up against young rhetoricians, (*retorōn*) are easily defeated. Considering the old men’s veteran status, this kind of treatment, the argument continues, is unfair and disgraceful.³¹⁷

³¹⁶Food is a classic motif in Old and Middle comedy. In Aristophanic comedy food seems to have played a dual role. On the one hand, enumerations of various types of food are remnants of the ritualistic motif of the Dionysian festivals that appealed to one of the most basic human needs - food as substance. On the other hand, extravagant fish delicacies were linked to non-democratic sentiments. Sprats were a non-exotic, inexpensive fish and therefore a “democratic fish.” On the later point see, Davidson, “Fish, Sex and Revolution in Athens,” 54.

³¹⁷ Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens*, 146, is of the mind that this passage should not be taken literally. While I agree with this author’s argument that this passage must be interpreted at the symbolic level, I disagree with his suggestion that the same passage seeks to convey “the conflict between the old and new styles of making war.” No mention is made here about changing warfare techniques. Moreover, there is no hind that Aristophanes was advocating for the Athenians to march out of the city walls and engage the Spartans in a phalanx battle. Quite the contrary. The *Acharnians*’ underlying, fundamental message is that of a negotiated peace treaty.

What are we to make of this? To begin, the phraseology used by the Chorus Leader invokes mental images of agon, and in particular wrestling (i.e., “quickly throws a hold on him and hits him with hard-ball phrases; then he drags him up...” (686-7). If we are to follow the argument laid out by the Chorus Leader, this verbal “wrestling” agon is not honourable because it does not involve the engagement of two *equal* opponents. If a young man fights an old man, his inevitable victory would be a testament to his cowardliness, not to his prowess.

In terms of appeal to the emotions, the Chorus Leader seems to be aiming for the emotions of pity and indignation. This is made evident by the image of a weeping old man claiming that the money put aside for his funeral is gone (691). The image of an old man with no money for a burial casket is indeed a most piteous image. It is even more so than the image of a beggar because the beggar does not claim that he is so poor that “he cannot even afford to die.”³¹⁸

Apart from that, it should be pointed out that the motif of old versus young that we encounter at the *epirrhema* is a universal element that is deeply rooted in the fertility rituals of many ancient civilizations. In our specific case, insofar as the Dionysian festivals were fertility rituals, and insofar as Old Comedy was part of the Dionysian festivities, the old versus young paradigm is prevalent in Old Comedy. One finds it in the *Clouds* (i.e., old father versus young son), in the *Assemblywomen* (i.e., old lovers versus young lovers) and to a certain extent one finds it even in the historical literary rivalry between old Cratinus and young Aristophanes (see Appendix III). Much could be written about the tensions between old and young not only in ancient Athens but in Aristophanic

³¹⁸ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 191, n. 691.

comedy as well.³¹⁹ However, that would be beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, what I will be focusing on is the manner in which Aristophanes manipulates the perception of old versus young to further the case for peace (more on this later). While the Chorus Leader raises the topic of age-related inequality he does not offer any proposed solution or advice on how to redeem the situation; it is simply a statement of a problem. (692-702). Not surprisingly, the *antode* repeats, whereby repetition is a central feature of incantations, and affirms all that the Chorus Leader had previously asserted in the *epirrhema*.

The only modification, which is easily overlooked, is the following: whereas the Chorus Leader claims that they [old men] fought in the sea battles (*enaumahēsamen*) (677) (i.e., Salamis?), the Chorus claims that they [old men] fought at Marathon with Marathon being repeated twice (696-698). This is puzzling, and I must admit I am at a loss to explain it. One possible (but far-fetched) explanation could be that Aristophanes is highlighting the Battle of Marathon to the detriment of Salamis. In Plato's *Laws* one observes a similar prejudicial favouring of Marathon over Salamis.

Cleinias: ...Stranger, we Cretans are in the habit of saying that the battle of Salamis was the salvation of Hellas.

Athenian Stranger: Why, yes: and that is an opinion which is widely spread both among Hellenes and barbarians. But Megillus³²⁰ and I say rather, that the battle of Marathon was the beginning, and the battle of Plataea the completion, of the great deliverance, and that these battles by land made the Hellenes better; whereas the sea-fights of Salamis and Artemisium- for I may as well put them together – made them no better, if I may say so without offence about the battles which helped to save us” (707c)³²¹

³¹⁹ On this subject Barry Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens: Ideology and Society in the Era of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Routledge, 1993), is an excellent reference.

³²⁰ Fictional Spartan character.

³²¹ Benjamin Jowett's translation.

Peter Euben argues that the above is nothing less than a rejection of Athenian naval power and democratic activism.³²² Is it possible that Aristophanes in a similar, prejudicial manner is downplaying the urban/Pireotic democrats in favour of the rural democrats?

Be that as it may, we now turn to the Chorus Leader and the *antepirrhema* (703-718). In this passage, names are named and a policy is proposed (i.e., “banish elderly defendants by using elderly persecutors, and youths by using youths”). Hence, whereas the *epirrhema* is abstract, philosophical, and universal, the *antepirrhema* is particular, political, and contextual. Prior to turning to the persons named in this passage, such as Thucydides, Cephsisodemus’ son, and the son of Cleinias, I want to say a word on the advocated policy. The Chorus Leader tackles the issue of natural inequalities by his proposed “old-to-old and young-to-young” decree (718), which translates basically into a “same to same” policy. Put in the language of political philosophy, Aristophanes’ proposal is that “those by nature weaker should be protected by the law against those who are by nature stronger.” This proposal establishes “equality, not by disregarding natural inequality, but by considering it”.³²³ Aristophanes’ “justice as fairness” doctrine (703) is

³²² Euben, *Corrupting Youth: Political Education, Democratic Culture and Political Theory*, 90. It should also be noted that some scholars argue that the link between democracy and sea power in ancient Athens was construed for purely ideological reasons by the likes of Pseudo-Xenophon (i.e., Old Oligarch) Plato and other critics of the Athenian democracy. For more on this topic see Ceccarelli, “Sans thalassocratie, pas de Démocratie? Le Rapport entre thalassocratie et démocratie à Athènes dans la discussion du Ve et IVe siècle,” 444-70, and Pritchard, “Kleisthenes and Athenian Democracy,” 145.

³²³ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 70-1.

by no means ridiculous or comic, something which is attested by the fact that this topic is still with us today in the form of a vibrant debate.³²⁴

Praiseworthy as Aristophanes proposed reform is, it is doubtful that the incantational music, dancing and metrical poetry that surrounds the *antepirrhema* was done *solely* with the aim of persuading the Athenian audience to enact a law ensuring the fair treatment of senior citizens in the laws courts. In all likelihood, the *ode/antode*, as well as the proposed policy of the *antepirrhema*, seems to be directly related to the three figures, 1) Cephisodemus' son; 2) the son of Cleinias; and 3) Thucydides, with a strong focus on the later. The above-mentioned figures are connected to the overall anti-war theme of the *Acharnians*. What follows next is an argument in defence of this claim.

In order to avoid any confusion it should be pointed out that Thucydides, son of Melesias, is not to be confused with Thucydides, son of Oloros, the famous historian. Thucydides, son of Melesias, was an Athenian aristocrat, the brother-in-law of Cimon and

³²⁴ The list is extensive and any effort at enumeration would be prejudicial on my part. That being said, Ronald Dworkin, "What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Welfare", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 10, (1981), 283-345, comes *somewhat* close to Aristophanic concerns with the "resource-based theory". Dworkin proposes a hypothetical "insurance" compensation scheme for those who find themselves disadvantaged in the natural distribution of talents. In the end, however, one has to retain a critical outlook in reference to Aristophanes. This is evident in the ironic play *Assemblywomen* and Praxagoras' radical communist program that sees the abolishment of money and property, and a compensatory sexual program whereby young men and women must first sexually satisfy their older counterparts prior to "satisfying" themselves (1015).

like him an oligarch.³²⁵ What is also interesting about Thucydides are the various rumours suggesting that he was actually the anonymous author of the *Constitution of the Athenians*, in other words, the so-called “Old Oligarch” or “Pseudo-Xenophon.”³²⁶

The reference to “Cephisodemus’ son”, we are told, was to a man by the name of Euathlus, a rather jealous prosecutor who was mocked in comedy as such. The same man had an Asiatic ancestor on his maternal side which explains the reference to the Scythians, a people whom the Greeks considered savages.³²⁷ In regards to Artachaees, we are told that he was a huge, stentorian Persian nobleman who accompanied Xerxes’ invading army into Greece.³²⁸ Last but not least, the “son of Cleinias” was none other than Alcibiades, the nephew of Pericles.

The allusion to a trial involving Thucydides (703-18) was to a historical event where Thucydides became tongue-tied during his defence speech. As a result of that failure Thucydides’ political career came to an end. Soon afterwards, he was sentenced to permanent exile from Athens.³²⁹ What should be of particular interest to us, however, is the historical relationship between Thucydides and Pericles.

³²⁵ Raubitschek, “Theopompos on Thucydides the Son of Melesias,” 1960.

³²⁶ Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, 136-8.

³²⁷ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 142, n. 90; Borthwick, “Aristophanes and the Trial of Thucydides Son of Melesias (“Acharnians” 717),” 207.

³²⁸ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 142, n. 91.

³²⁹ This, as one scholar comments, makes our passage the last literary source to “furnish us with the last glimpse we have of the curiously ill-documented career” of Thucydides before he fades “into silence from the pages of Athenian history” (Borthwick, “Aristophanes and the Trial of Thucydides Son of Melesias (*Acharnians* 717),” 203, 210).

Thucydides was a skilful wrestler but an inept orator.³³⁰ Indeed, in a tongue-in-cheek anecdote it is said that, when the Spartan King Archidamus asked Thucydides who was the best wrestler, him or Pericles, Thucydides is said to have replied: “Who can tell? When I throw him, he argues that he never fell, and wins his point and persuades the crowd.”³³¹ No doubt, Thucydides’ comment stemmed from personal experience. Thucydides was the leader of the oligarchic aristocracy and therefore Pericles’ opponent.³³² When Thucydides attempted to ostracize Pericles not only did he fail, but incredibly enough Pericles managed to ostracize Thucydides (!).³³³ With Thucydides in exile, the oligarchic party was left leaderless and posed no further risk to Pericles. When his ten-year exile expired, Thucydides returned to Athens in the spring of 433 BC (two years prior to the outbreak of the war) during which he was between the ages of seventy to eighty year’s old.³³⁴ Despite his advanced age, Thucydides attempted (once more) to form the nucleus of a movement against Pericles. This time however, Thucydides did not

³³⁰ Thucydides’ father, Melesias, was considered to be the greatest wrestler in Greece. Thucydides’ two sons, Melesias and Stefanos, were also considered to be the finest wrestlers in Greece (see Plato’s *Meno* (94c) and Wade-Gery, “Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy,” 209-10).

³³¹ Plutarch, *Pericles*, 11.1.

³³² Wade-Gery, “Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy,” 215.

³³³ Keightley and Smith, *The History of Greece*, 163-4.

³³⁴ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 142, n. 90, suggests that Thucydides was “nearly eighty years old”; Borthwick, “Aristophanes and the Trial of Thucydides Son of Melesias (“Acharnians” 717),” 204, suggests seventy, while Wade-Gery, “Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy,” 290, suggests seventy-five or more.

attack Pericles; rather, he attacked his friend, the philosopher Anaxagoras.³³⁵ Thucydides' charge in that trial was two-fold: Medism and impiety. In specific regards to the first charge, that of Medism, Leonard Woodbury is confident that Thucycides sought to exploit popular prejudices against Anaxagoras on account of his Ionian background. He writes:

It cannot have been difficult at Athens during the generation that followed the great invasion to arouse prejudice against Ionians on political, as well as on moral, social, and theological grounds. The son of Melesias, as a spokesman for traditional Athenian views, may very well have shared this prejudice and so produced the double charge against Anaxagoras. If Pericles was already known as an Anaxagorean, soft on irreligion and the barbarians, Thucydides may also have found in the accusations a handy stick with which to beat his political rival.³³⁶

Surprisingly, that trial resulted in a guilty verdict and Anaxagoras was condemned to death in absentia. The same year also marked the trial of Aspasia. Not without coincidence, ancient historians, the likes of Plutarch and Diodoros, also report a series of malicious litigations around the same time against figures with close ties to Pericles, such

³³⁵ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 142, n. 90. For a chronological timetable of the events see Wade-Gery, "Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy," 227. On Anaxagoras' educational influence on Pericles see Plato *Phaedrus* (270a), and on Anaxagoras' influence on Pericles composure and mannerisms see Plutarch, *Pericles*, VI.

³³⁶ Woodbury, "Anaxagoras and Athens," 307. Anaxagoras, (Anax + agoras, King of the Assembly), was from the town of Clazomenae in Asia Minor. Apart from that, that charge of 'Medism' (i.e., Medes, Persian tribe) was a charge alleging that Anaxagoras had a friendly disposition or friendly relations with the Persians.

as Damon³³⁷ and Pheidias.³³⁸ This has led modern commentators to conclude that all these trials represented a politically coordinated attack on Pericles.³³⁹

This brings to mind the importance of being able to distinguish between *stated* and *non-stated* motives. For instance, we should not forget the argument by Thucydides, son of Oloros, that the seemingly pious Spartan demand that the Athenians “drive out” the curse of the goddess from Athens (2.13.1) was in reality a political manoeuvre aimed at hurting Pericles.³⁴⁰ Granted that the trials involving Anaxagoras, Aspasia, Pheidias and Damon were undertaken with the aim of hurting Pericles, this, in itself, does not tell us much about why was Thucydides’ attack unsuccessful during his first attempt, but successful in his second. What had transpired in that 10 to 12 year period?

In an off-hand remark, Wade-Gery, commenting on ancient gossips claiming that Pericles instigated the Peloponnesian War in order to deflect attention away from the trials plaguing his acquaintances, writes: “Pericles (I need not say) did not make war solely to put a stop to this nuisance, yet these tales, if true, are not irrelevant: though it is more likely that the persecutions were meant to stop the war than *vice versa*” (original

³³⁷ A musicologist whose research interests focused on the effect of music on people’s moods. According to Podlecki, *Perikles and his Circle*, 18, Damon was perceived to be a sophist.

³³⁸ Pheidias was a famous architect and sculptor and the artistic director of the Parthenon.

³³⁹ See Wade-Gery, “Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy,” 220, and Borthwick, “Aristophanes and the Trial of Thucydides Son of Melesias (*Acharnians* 717),” 206. For a detailed discussion of Anaxagoras, including contradictory dates concerning his trial, see Woodbury, “Anaxagoras and Athens,” 302, n. 20.

³⁴⁰ Marr, “What Did the Athenians Demand in 432 B.C.?,” 121.

emphasis).³⁴¹ The importance of this remark cannot be overstated. If Wade-Gery's assessment is correct, as I believe it is, then this would help us to understand why Thucydides' second attack was successful. To be precise, it was successful because anti-war supporters *flocked* to Thucydides' side in an effort to halt the outbreak of the war. These newfound supporters *cannot* be assumed to have been oligarchs themselves (if they were, then where were they when Thucydides was sent into exile?) This also lends further credence to the theory that many Athenians saw Pericles as a pivotal figure in the outbreak of the war.

Moving on, it would appear that the friends and associates of Pericles had not forgotten about Thucydides or his trial of Anaxagoras. Shortly after Pericles died in the plague, and in an obvious act of political revenge, charges were filed against Thucydides. We do not know much about Thucydides' second trial. What we do know, however, is that Thucydides became confused and tongue-tied during his trial, leading to his defeat and a second (this time permanent) exile from Athens.

We now turn to the imagery of our *antepirrhema* passage. In a highly relevant article Grace Macurdy embarks on an analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*. In particular, she undertakes the analysis of the prayer by the Chorus (879 f). *Oedipus Tyrannos* was performed in 429 BC (two years prior to the *Acharnians*) and the passage under question reads: "The god will never weaken the wrestling (*palaisma*), that is for the good of the state". This utterance is interpreted as assailing either Pericles or

³⁴¹ Those ancient gossips are to be found in Plutarch, *Pericles*, XXXII. Wade-Gery is also of the mind that Thucydides was "like his father, a Panhellenic figure" and that "Panhellenism was a thing which could be made to serve Athens: to Thucydides, it meant equality of all Greek states, the renunciation of Athenian domination" ("Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy," 218, 220).

Alcibiades.³⁴² Far more interesting is Macurdy's claim that Sophocles' passage is in reality a metaphorical reference to Thucydides. "Sophocles", she writes, "was contrasting the noble "wrestling" of Thucydides with the "impiety" of Pericles."³⁴³ The theme of religious piety reaches its zenith in Macurdy's statement that Sophocles belonged to the *christoi*, namely, to "the conservative, religious party, to whose support Thucydides, son of Melesias, returned in 433."³⁴⁴ Recall that when Lamachus demanded to know Dikaiopolis' identity he responded with the words: "Who I am? I am a *polites christos*"³⁴⁵ (595) (obviously, Aristophanes had also paid a nocturnal visit to Sophocles' garden).

Having considered all of the above, we are now in a better position to examine our passage. The *antepirrhema* (703-18) appear to be a motley arrangement of rhetorical flowers. The indignation flower is the one where the Chorus Leader claims: "Yes, how can it be fair that a stooped man of Thucydides' age should be destroyed in the grip of that Scythian wilderness, this man here, Cephisodemus' son, the prattling advocate?" (703-05). Here, the image of Thucydides as a "stooped" elderly man is a mirror-image of the Achaean Chorus which, similar to Thucydides, are shown as weak due to old age (219-20). The piteous flower is the one about which the Chorus Leader claims: "I for one felt pity and wept away a tear at the sight of an old gentleman being confounded by a

³⁴² Macurdy, "References to Thucydides, Son of Melesias, and to Pericles in Sophocles of 863-910," 310, [sic].

³⁴³ Ibid, 307.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 309.

³⁴⁵ On another note, notice the resemblance to *Christos* (i.e., Christ). *Christos* was used to translate the Hebrew word Messiah (one who is) and is translated as the "Anointed One" (see Berard L. Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1993), 74).

bowman” (706-7). The rhetorical flower is the one in which the Chorus Leader claims: “By Demeter, when Thucydides was himself, he wouldn’t lightly have brooked Artachaees himself, but would have first outwrestled ten Euathluses, outshouted with a roar three hundred bowmen, and shot circles round the kinsmen of the advocate’s father”(708-12).

In the above, Aristophanes is using what Murray Edelman terms *condensational symbols*,³⁴⁶ namely, the recollection of past glories that are pregnant with emotive meaning. For example, the claim that Thucydides would not have tolerated Artachaees (the legendary Persian warrior) in his younger days (709) is meant to evoke the audience’s collective historical memory of their victory over the Persians. Aristophanes alludes to Thucydides as a Marathon fighter in the same way that he alludes to the Acharnian Chorus as Marathon-fighters despite the fact that neither one of them had anything to do with the Battle of Marathon (490). Put in another way, Aristophanes is engaging in rhetorical mythopoesis. More than that, he is utilizing what Leon Craig terms an even greater potent form of charm than either music or poetry, and that is “well-crafted flattery.”³⁴⁷ To be sure, Aristophanes’ “well-crafted flattery” identifies Thucydides as a fierce Marathon-fighter, implying that the Acharnian Chorus, (insofar as they are also identified as Marathon-fighters) were also fierce fighters *par excellence*. By drawing these common links, Aristophanes, I would argue, was attempting to “befriend” Thucydides to the Acharnian Chorus (read Acharnian men) in order to bolster the case for peace talks.

³⁴⁶ Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Use of Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

³⁴⁷ Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato’s Republic*, 111.

At the risk of repetition, the *thumos* that the rural democrats were feeling towards Pericles (despite the latter's death) was driving this important voting segment directly into the arms of the war radicals. The cries by the war radicals, typical in Lamachus' claim that he would continue fighting and harassing the Peloponnesians in every possible form (620-3), were acting like "fair winds" on the "embers" of anger (668-9) that were smouldering in the hearts of the Acharnians.

In his support for negotiated peace talks, Aristophanes had to counteract these cries. This is not to say that Aristophanes was seeking to remove all traces of thumotic anger. On the contrary. The purpose of Dikaiopolis' inflammatory accusations (i.e., that the pro-war politicians were the true financial beneficiaries of the war) was to generate envy and anger amongst the Acharnian Chorus. Thus, if we are to take as a given that there are three types of persuasion, namely, "response reinforcing", "response shaping", and "response changing,"³⁴⁸ it would be safe to conclude that Aristophanes was pursuing the latter type. Specifically, Aristophanes was seeking to steer the Acharnian voters away from the war party, and in the direction of the peace party.

Granted that Thucydides was an oligarch, this by no means implies that Aristophanes was an oligarch as well. Neither does it mean that Aristophanes was seeking to convert the Acharnian democrats into oligarchs. Aristophanes' sympathetic depiction of the "Old Oligarch" in the *Acharnians* is explained by the fact that Thucydides, son of Melesias, was an ardent opponent of the Peloponnesian War. I would argue that if Aristophanes were to be identified with any political party, that party would have to be

³⁴⁸ With "response changing" being described as the most difficult because "it involves asking people to switch from one attitude to another" (Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays*, 33).

the “Peace Party” and not the Oligarchic or the Democratic Party.³⁴⁹ Indeed, if we were to construct a fantastical scenario where both the Oligarchic and the Democratic Party begun advocating the cause of war, and some “Martians” landed on ancient Athens and begun advocating for peace, Aristophanes, I would argue, would have supported this “Martian Party.”

Last but not least, there is the attack on the “wide-arsed, prattling son of Cleinias”, namely, Alcibiades. Wade-Gery’s argues that Thucydides found “Alcibiades and company, more merciless.”³⁵⁰ However, the truth is that we lack concrete evidence linking Alcibiades to Thucydides’ trial. In all likelihood Aristophanes was attacking the ambitious Alcibiades because he had already begun looking at the Peloponnesian War as a venue in which to demonstrate his military skills in his quest for honour and glory.³⁵¹

Ultimately, the problem that Aristophanes had with Alcibiades is the same problem that Socrates had with Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic*. All were spirited young men attracted to the praise and recognition offered by the polis in the arena of war and agonistic politics. Ultimately, the difference between Socrates and Aristophanes is one of scope. The challenge for Socrates was on attracting and retaining

³⁴⁹ Granted that in 425 BC many oligarchs wanted to bring the war to an end, this does not mean that all of the peace advocates were oligarchs (think of Nicias).

³⁵⁰ Wade-Gery, “Thucydides the Son of Melesias: A Study of Periklean Policy,” 215.

³⁵¹ Alcibiades went on and became one of the most notorious personalities of the war; an intelligent and competent leader but also untrustworthy (Moorton, “Aristophanes on Alcibiades,” 345-59).

these Achillean-type, honour-seeking young men to a life of philosophy.³⁵² The challenge for Aristophanes was more pressing, namely, preventing such young men from blocking or derailing the peace negotiations.

Plato recognized Aristophanes' challenge and in the *Symposium* Socrates is exonerated of any responsibility in relation to Alcibiades' political education. In what is essentially a direct response to Aristophanes, Plato has a drunk but truth-speaking³⁵³ Alcibiades praise Socrates³⁵⁴ by claiming that he only falls victim to the favours of the many (*ettemenō tēs timēs*) when he distances himself from the company of Socrates (216b). In other words, Plato, after hinting that the *Symposium* is an agonistic drama in which Dionysus is the presiding judge (175e), introduces Alcibiades as a character-witness. Perhaps it is to be expected that Plato felt compelled to distance Socrates from Alcibiades' political actions. After the Peace of Nicias was signed in 421 BC, Alcibiades

³⁵² Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic*, 1994.

³⁵³ **Alcibiades:** "Ah, you would laugh at me because I am drunk? Well, for my part, laugh as you may, I am sure I am speaking the truth" (213a) (Plato is hereby exploiting the perception that drunks, similar to children and fools, are unable to lie, thereby lending weight to Alcibiades' eulogy of Socrates).

³⁵⁴ The entry of Alcibiades in the company of a flute girl and followers is eerily reminiscent of Dikaiopolis' exodus in the *Acharnians* (198-1235). Alcibiades enters the house of Agathon, at the conclusion of Socrates' encomium of Eros, and as everyone is applauding, with the exception of Aristophanes who was "beginning to remark on the allusions that Socrates' speech had made to his own speech" (212c).

began sabotaging it,³⁵⁵ proving Aristophanes' suspicions about Alcibiades' nature all too correct.

³⁵⁵ The Peace of Nicias had weak points (i.e., the exclusion of all the allied city-states in the peace talks). Nonetheless, Alcibiades' envy towards Nicias, his eagerness to demonstrate his military genius, and a wounded pride after being excluded from the peace talks on account of his age, led him to undermine this peace (Thuc. 5.40-48).

CHAPTER V. ARISTOPHANIC COMPASSION

5.1 The Megarian Trader: Lines 719-859

The reason we start a war is to fight a war, win a war, thereby causing no more war!

George W. Bush

Fighting for peace is like screwing for virginity.

Anonymous

At the conclusion of the parabasis, Dikaiopolis comes out of his house with some boundary markers (possibly stones) and begins spreading them around his house, thus marking his property as a war-free zone. At the same time he also brings out three leather straps and a table and proclaims the following:

Dikaiopolis: These are the boundaries to my market. Here all Peloponnesians, (720) Megarians and Boetians are free to trade, provided they sell to me and not to Lamachus. As trade commissioners (*agoranomoi*)³⁵⁶ I hereby appoint these three duly allotted straps from Flogwell. Let no informer (*sykophantes*) enter here nor any other canary man (725). I'll go fetch the pillar with my treaty inscribed, and set it up in the marker for all to see (728).

[*Dikaiopolis goes inside his house*]

By proclaiming his intention to trade with enemy states, especially Megara, Dikaiopolis acts in opposition to official Athenian foreign policy. Whereas Athens keeps her markets closed to Megarians, Dikaiopolis keeps his market open to the Megarians, but closed to Lamachus (aka the Athenian war party). Dikaiopolis is barely out of sight when a man

³⁵⁶ The *agoranomoi* were public officials appointed by lot to two separate boards, one for Athens and one for the Piraeus. They were responsible for the "enforcement of all laws relating to the marker areas and market business" (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 194, n. 723).

from Megara enters the stage with two young girls in tow. As they go and stand outside Dikaiopolis' door, we hear the man talking in his native dialect.

Megarian: Hail, Athenian market, dear (*phila*) to Megarians! (729) By the God of Friendship (*Philion*), I've missed you as a son misses a mother! [*Turning towards his two daughters.*] But you, you miserable father's rotten little kids, go up the steps there for bread, if you can find some anywhere. [*Pointing to the steps leading up to Dikaiopolis house.*] Now listen, give me your undivided bellies: do you want to be sold or miserably starve?

Girls: Sold! Sold! (735)

Megarian: So say I myself. But who'd be brainless enough to buy you, an obvious waste of money? No matter, I've got a real Megarian trick.³⁵⁷ I'll dress you up and say I've got piggies.³⁵⁸ Put on these piggy-hoofs, and see that you look like a fine sow's farrow (740). Because if you get home unsold, by Hermes you'll find out what famine is (*tās limoū kakōs*)! Put on these snouts too, and then get into the sack here, and be sure to grunt and oink and sound like pigs at the Mysteries.³⁵⁹ And I'll call around for Dikaiopolis. Dikaiopolis! Want to buy some piggies? (749).

A number of points are remarkable here. At the dramaturgical level, the Megarian uses on Dikaiopolis the same trick that Dikaiopolis used on the Acharnian Chorus. If we recall, when Dikaiopolis arrived at the house of Euripides pondering the best plan to persuade the Acharnian Chorus, he confided to Euripides and the audience his plan to deceive the Acharnian Chorus by wearing a pitiable disguise. In a similar manner, when the Megarian trader arrives at the house of Dikaiopolis pondering the best plan to persuade Dikaiopolis,

³⁵⁷ According to Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 194, n. 738, this is meant to convey a "low trick" since the Megarians had a reputation for double-dealings. An alternative suggestion is that this "trick" is appropriate to low comedy, which the Athenians associated with Megara.

³⁵⁸ Word-play on the double meaning of Greek *choiros*= piglet (a staple meat and sacrificial animal) and "hairless vulva" comparable to the English slang word of "pussy" (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 147, n. 94). Sommerstein, on the other hand, favours the translation of "porker" instead, whereby pork is defined as "women as food for men's lust" (*Acharnians*, 195, n. 739)

³⁵⁹ Referring to the Eleusian Mysteries in honour of Demeter where the initiands sacrificed suckling pigs (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 147, n. 95).

he confides to his daughters and the audiences his plan to deceive Dikaiopolis by disguising his daughters.

At this point it becomes apparent that the claim by the Chorus Leader that Dikaiopolis “won the debate” (626) and changed the peoples’ mind about the peace is a half-truth. If Dikaiopolis had truly changed the peoples’ mind and had won the war-debate, the play could have ended at that point. Yet, the play continues with the Megarian scene (719-859), the Theban scene (860-958), and another contest between Dikaiopolis and Lamachus (959-1235). What are we to make of this? One explanation could be that Dikaiopolis’ defence speech constituted only the first part of the play’s overall anti-war/pro-peace message. The second part of the play, or the post-parabasis segment, is a continuation of the same message but from a different perspective. Whereas the first part portrays “things as they were,” the second part portrays “things as they could be.” Otherwise put, whereas the first part of the play depicts the consequences of policies advocated by the war advocates, the second part depicts the consequences of peace policies enacted by peace advocates.

In specific regards to the Megarian episode, this scene constitutes an important part of Aristophanes’ anti-war rhetoric. What does Aristophanes’ anti-war rhetoric consist of one asks? Let us turn to the Megarian scene in search of an answer. The first thing that we observe is that the Megarian father does not force his daughters to be sold. Rather, he outlines their two available options: “Do they wish to starve to death, or to they wish do be sold?” Faced with the option of death by starvation or life in slavery, the young girls choose the latter option and shout: “Sold! Sold!” (735). Obviously these two

young girls could not bring themselves to embrace the tenet “Live free or die”³⁶⁰ any more than the Athenians could when faced with the option of starvation or Spartan slavery in 404.³⁶¹ The father agrees with his daughters’ judgement, but unfortunately he has bad news for them: nobody would buy them in their human form because that would be an “obvious waste of money”. The Megarian does not specify why this is the case. Is it because they are too young to be of any use as slaves? Not to be discouraged, the cunning Megarian claims he has thought of a real Megarian scheme: dress up the girls as piglets and sell them as sacrificial animals. Neither the father nor the girls seem to be too concerned about the plan’s “sacrificial” element. Is it because the possibility of death by hunger is more near than the possibility of death by sacrifice. Or is it because the girls are hoping to escape before their scheduled “sacrifice” either by running away or by discarding their disguise? Or is it because this is a comedy where (unlike tragedy) death is absent?

Be that as it may, one is again reminded of Dikaiopolis’ own scheming plan of disguising himself as a beggar in order to save his life. Unlike Dikaiopolis, however, the Megarian girls do not conceive of the plan themselves, nor do they go about obtaining the theatrical props themselves; both of these things are done by their father. In this sense, the Megarian girls are innocent bystanders. They have no control over the political forces that brought about their starvation (i.e., war). Nor do they have control over the political forces that will bring about their salvation (i.e., peace). Otherwise put, children do not play any role in the theatre of war; they are an innocent audience. Also, whereas in line

³⁶⁰ The official motto of New Hampshire.

³⁶¹ The Athenians were not enslaved; instead, a Spartan-backed regime was installed in Athens.

535 the audience *hears* from Dikaiopolis that the Megarians are starving, here the audience is *shown* in dramatic form the nature, extent, and consequences of that starvation. Human beings being treated like animals. This is part of what Aristophanic peace rhetoric looks like.

A graver, ironic element of Aristophanes' peace rhetoric is also observable in the same passage. We know that when the plague broke out in Athens in 430 BC (five years prior to the staging of *Acharnians*) it exposed the fragility of human ethics and morality. Thucydides, son of Oloros, writes that during the plague many Athenians found themselves engaging in de-humanizing behaviour such as leaving their dead unburied (2.47-51). As we know, no human culture abandons their dead; only animals do so. Moreover, by leaving their dead unburied or un-cremated the Athenians were risking having their bodies eaten by scavenging animals, such as dogs, birds or pigs. Of the above, only pigs were eaten in ancient Athens. This act, or more correctly "failure to act," was imposed on the Athenians by the necessity of the plague, itself the indirect result of the war. In Aristophanes' *trugōdia* the Megarian girls are shown being compelled to engage in de-humanizing behaviour as well. Their human features are disguised: pig snouts and hoofs are placed over noses, hands and feet, and animal grunts replace their human speech. Aristophanes' message? If the Athenians had rescinded on the Megarian embargo (535-6) war, "from which the greatest disasters, public and private, come,"³⁶² would have been avoided. By inference, Athens and Megara would not have been compelled to sacrifice their humanity.

³⁶² Plato, *Republic* (374a).

In the end, insofar as justice is not to the interest of the stronger (i.e., Athens), or to the interest of the weaker (i.e., Megara), indeed, insofar as justice is not an interest “except in the sense that what we do to others we also do to ourselves,”³⁶³ Aristophanes is demonstrating that what Athens did to Megara it also did to itself. On a similar note, and in refutation of the Glauconic viewpoint, we could say that - *not* that the simple, peaceful city is a place of pigs - but that the luxurious, warlike city is a place where human beings are transformed into pigs.

As already mentioned, when Dikaiopolis was fighting for his life he was the “deceiver” (442-4) and the Acharnian Chorus was the “deceived.” In this case, the Megarian trader is the deceiver and Dikaiopolis is the deceived. In both cases the audience is made aware of the identity of deceiver and deceived alike. Needless to say, this induces the audience to feel “superior” to the deceived party because they know something that the deceived party does not. Put in Hobbesian language, the audience feels superior because of the other party’s ignorance (the reference here being to Hobbes’ well-known “superiority theory” of humour which states that laughter arises from a feeling of superiority in comparison to others).³⁶⁴

We now turn our attention to the interaction between the Megarian trader and Dikaiopolis. It should be noted that this passage contains one of the most sexual-suggestive parts of the play. Much of the humour here relies on the sexual punning of the

³⁶³ Euben, *Corrupting Youth: Political Education, Democratic Culture and Political Theory*, 86.

³⁶⁴ “Laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others” (*Leviathan* 1651).

word *choiros*, which has the double meaning of “piglet” as well as “hairless vulva” comparable to the English slang word “pussy.”³⁶⁵

[Upon hearing his name, Dikaiopolis emerges from his house]

Dikaiopolis: What this? A Megarian?

Megarian: We’ve come to trade (750).

Dikaiopolis: How are you all doing?

Megarian: We’re always in front of the fire, fasting.

Dikaiopolis: Feasting, yes, that’s certainly nice, if there’s music. Otherwise, how are you Megarians doing these days?

Megarian: Same as ever. As I was starting on this trip our councilmen were hard at work for the city (755), providing for our quickest and direct destruction.

Dikaiopolis: Then you’ll soon be rid of your troubles.

Megarian: Indeed.

Dikaiopolis: What else at Megara? How’s the price of grain?

Megarian: Where we are its mighty high, like the gods.

Dikaiopolis: What have you got there? Must be salt.

Megarian: Don’t you all control it? (760)

Dikaiopolis: Garlic, then?

Megarian: Garlic! Every time you invade, you dig up the bulbs with a hoe, like field mice.³⁶⁶

Dikaiopolis: What did you bring then?

Megarian: I’ve got piggies for the Mysteries.

Dikaiopolis: That’s fine (*kalos legein*)! Show me then (*epideixon*).³⁶⁷

[The Megarian pulls out of the sack one of the girls]

Megarian: Aren’t they fine though? (765) Have a feel, if you like. How plum and pretty she is!

Dikaiopolis: What’s this supposed to be?

Megarian: A piggy by Zeus!

Dikaiopolis: What are you talking about? What sort of piggy is *this*?

Megarian: Megarian. Isn’t this a piggy?

Dikaiopolis: It doesn’t look (*phainetai*) like one to me.

Megarian: [Turning and addressing the audience.] Isn’t this awful (*ou deina*)? Look, the scepticism of this man! (770) He says this isn’t a piggy. [Turning back to Dikaiopolis.] I tell you what: if you like, bet me some thyme-seasoned salt that this isn’t a piggy, in the Greek sense (*Ellanōn nomō*).

Dikaiopolis: All right, but it belongs to a human being.

³⁶⁵ Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 194, n. 739; Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 147, n. 94.

³⁶⁶ Megara was Athens’ neighbour to the south and therefore the target of border-raids.

³⁶⁷ Similar to *epideixis*; a rhetorical display to the idea of argumentative proof and demonstration, showing as well as showing off.

Megarian: Yes, by Diocles;³⁶⁸ it belongs to me! Whose to you think it is? (775) Would you like to hear it squeal?

Dikaiopolis: By the gods, I certainly would.

Megarian: [*Addressing the girl/piggy in a low voice.*] Sound off, then, little piggy. Right now. You won't? Damn you to perdition, you're keeping mum? By Hermes, I'll take you home again.

First Girl: Oink! Oink! (*koi koi*) (780)

Megarian: Is that a piggy?

Dikaiopolis: It looks like a piggy (*choiros*) now, but all grown up it'll be a pussy (*kusthos*)!³⁶⁹

Megarian: Rest assured, in five years she'll be just like her mother.

Dikaiopolis: But this one isn't even suitable for sacrifice.

Megarian: Indeed? In what way unsuitable for sacrifice?

Dikaiopolis: It's got no tail! (*kerkon ouk ehei*).³⁷⁰ (785)

Megarian: She's still young, but when she's grown up to sowhood she'll get a big, fat pink one. [*Taking the other girl from the sack*] But if you want to rear one, here's a fine piggy for you.

Dikaiopolis: Why, this one's pussy is the twin of the other one's!

Megarian: Sure, she's got the same mother and father. (790) If she fills out and gets downy with hair, she'll be a very fine piggy to sacrifice to Aphrodite.

Dikaiopolis: But a piggy isn't sacrificed to Aphrodite.

Megarian: A piggy not sacrificed to Aphrodite? Why, to her alone of deities! (795) What's more, the meat of these piggies is absolutely delicious when it's skewered on a spit.

Dikaiopolis: Are they ready to eat without their mother?

Megarian: Yes, and without their father, too, by Poseidon.

Dikaiopolis: What's their favourite food?

Megarian: Anything you give them. Ask them yourself.

Dikaiopolis: Piggy, piggy!

³⁶⁸ Megarian hero who was celebrated with an annual festival at Megara.

³⁶⁹ The words *choiros* and *kusthos* rhyme; in addition they also play upon the obscene ambiguity of the passage. Sommerstein translates these lines as: "It's got the look of a 'porker' now; but when it's mature it'll be a beaver!" making Henderson's translation (see above) more apt. However, even this translation does not convey the meaning of *choiros* (pussy) indicating a young girl and *kusthos* (vulva) indicating an older (perhaps married) woman. In turn, the meaning behind this joke rests with the ancient conception that saw the dual wild/tame nature of pigs as being comparable to female sexuality which was also regarded as a wild/dangerous force unless tamed in marriage (on this theme see Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 206, n. 42).

³⁷⁰ *Kerkon* was also a slang word for penis (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 155, n. 97).

First Girl: Oink! Oink! (800)

Dikaiopolis: Will you eat chickpeas?³⁷¹

First Girl: [*Doubtfully*] Oink! Oink! Oink!

Dikaiopolis: What then? Phibalean figs?

First Girl: Oink! Oink!

[*Turning to the second girl.*]

Dikaiopolis: What about you? Will you eat them?

Second Girl: Oink! Oink! Oink!

Dikaiopolis: How keenly you both squeal at the word “figs”! Someone fetch some figs from inside for the little piggies. [*Figs are brought out and Dikaiopolis tosses them on the ground for the girl/piggies.*] (805) Will they eat them? Good heavens, how they slurp them down. Much honoured Heracles!³⁷² Where are these piggies from? Evidently from Hungary!

Megarian: [*Aside.*] Well, they didn’t bolt down all the figs. I managed to pick up this one for myself (810)

Dikaiopolis: By god, they’re a delightful pair of creatures. How much will the piggies cost me? Name your price.

Megarian: This one here for a bunch of garlic; the other one, if you like, for only a peck of salt.

Dikaiopolis: I’ll take them. Wait here.

Megarian: All right. [*Dikaiopolis goes inside his house*] (815) Hermes of Traders, may I sell that wife of mine on such terms, and my own mother too!

[*An informer (sycophant) enters the stage*]

Informer: Sir, your nationality?

Megarian: Megarian, a piggy dealer.

Informer: In that case, I’ll expose these piggies as contraband, and you as well!

Megarian: Here we go again, back to where our problems first began! (820)

Informer: You’ll regret that Megarian talk. You wont surrender the sack?

Megarian: Dikaiopolis! Dikaiopolis! I’m being exposed!

[*Dikaiopolis comes running out of his house*]

Dikaiopolis: By whom? Who’s exposing you? [*Flicking his straps*] Market commissioners, aren’t you going to keep these informers out? [*Addressing the informer*] (825) Who taught you to expose without a wick?³⁷³

Informer: I’m not to expose (*phanō*) our enemies (*polemious*) then?

Dikaiopolis: You’ll regret it, if you don’t run off and do your informing elsewhere.

[*The informer runs away*]

Megarian: What a curse (*kakon*) this is in Athens!

³⁷¹ Double phallic meaning.

³⁷² Herakles’ name was synonymous with a gluttonous, ravenous appetite.

³⁷³ Possibly punning on the double meaning of wick as penis. Hence, the sycophant’s lack of phallic

costume would read along the lines of “Who taught you to expose without a phallus?”

(Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 197, n. 826; Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 161, n. 101).

Dikaiopolis: Never mind, Megarian. Take this garlic and salt, the price you asked for the little piggies, and best of luck to you.

Megarian: Luck's not native to us.

Dikaiopolis: If I was being meddlesome let it be on my head.

Megarian: [*Addressing his daughters*] Little piggies, even without your father, try to get salt with the loaf you cobble, if anyone gives you one.

[*The Megarian exits, Dikaiopolis takes the girls/piggies into his house, and the Chorus is left on the stage to address the audience*]

“Laughter,” Nietzsche writes, “means: to rejoice at another’s expense (*schadenfroh sein*), but with a good conscience.”³⁷⁴ While we know that Aristophanes’ audience were in all likelihood laughing at this scene and rejoicing at Dikaiopolis’ expense on account of his ignorance it is unclear whether Aristophanes had his audience laughing in a good or a bad conscience.

Our argument so far is that underneath the thick layer of iambic humour and some Athenian criticism, the Megarian episode is inherently compassionate. However, it should be pointed out that this view is not the only one to be found in the literature. If anything, there is a long-running debate surrounding the Megarian passage, as well as the Theban passage, for the two are a pair (much the same way that the Persian and Thracian passages are also a pair). The debate revolves around those who argue that this passage is *vindictive*, those who argue that it is *selfish*, and those who argue that it is *compassionate*. This debate is part of a broader, more fundamental debate, surrounding the very nature of the *Acharnians*, in particular, whether or not the *Acharnians* is an anti-war, a pro-war, or simply a neutral play.

³⁷⁴Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 200.

We begin with those who suggest that the Megarian passage is a vindictive episode. W. Forrest, within the framework of his argument that the *Acharnians* is in reality a pro-war play, and in refutation of the suggestion that Aristophanes' is displaying pity towards the Megarians, writes the following:

True, there is some pity- Aristophanes does perhaps feel sorry for his rather pathetic Megarian as more active soldiers feel sorry for their enemies in a way unintelligible to the fireside patriot. But this kind of fellow-feeling oddly enough does not prevent him from taking pleasure at the same time in the pain that is being inflicted in so far as this is likely to bring victory nearer. Life was grim enough in Athens in 425; one of the few reliefs an Athenian would have, the only real reprisal he could take for the ravaging of Attica was in the regular invasions of the Megarid. What could be more pleasant than to see on the stage what he hoped the effect of these invasions would be?³⁷⁵

Forrest's argument rests on the assumption that the Acharnian population, and the Athenians in general, had grown so bitter after six years of warfare that they were now deriving pleasure from watching the suffering of their enemies, adults and children alike. Forrest's theatrical-vengeance hypothesis is not entirely without merit. What this author describes, seems to me, to be the so-called "cycle of violence," whereby violence breeds more violence, and acrimonious feelings increase exponentially over the course of a war. While this sort of acrimonious revenge does exist, what we need to ask is whether or not there is evidence in the *Acharnians* that would indicate that Aristophanes was appealing to this sentiment. Are there any indications in the play that would lead us to believe that Aristophanes was appealing to feelings of hatred and vindictiveness towards the Megarians? I would say not.

³⁷⁵ Forrest, "Aristophanes' "Acharnians"," 6.

This brings us to the second argument: that this passage is selfish. This argument takes various forms. All, however, center on the notion that Dikaiopolis “swindles the Megarian into selling his two daughters for some garlic and salt.”³⁷⁶ Let us begin with the word “swindle” which assumes that Dikaiopolis tricks the Megarian. If we recall, Aristophanes makes it clear that it is the Megarian who conceives of the scheme (738). As for the assertion that there is “selling” involved, as we have seen there is no such thing. The transaction consists of a barter; two piglets in exchange for salt and garlic. Bartering, as opposed to a cash-economy, is a more ancient and localized form of trade.³⁷⁷ Ultimately, Dikaiopolis’ agora is a version of the “simple cash-less rural system” whose demise Dikaiopolis “mourns” in the opening monologue (36).³⁷⁸

This leaves us with the assumption that Dikaiopolis was aware that he was getting young girls instead of piglets. Once again, however, at no point is the audience led to believe that Dikaiopolis was aware of the Megarian deceit. While the audience *are* made aware, Dikaiopolis lies in complete ignorance and the audience laughs at this ignorance - a real Aristophanic trick (738).

This brings us to the last objection, namely, that the amount of garlic and salt given to the Megarian is not equal in value to the “piglets” and is therefore unfair. Let us begin by assuming that Dikaipolis gives the salt and garlic not in exchange for the young girls (as it often assumed in the literature) but for the piglets. Would that have constituted a fair trade? Under ideal market conditions, obviously not. However, the Megarian was not

³⁷⁶ An argument by Compton-Engle, “From Country to City: The Persona of Dicaeopolis in Aristophanes’ “Acharnians,”” 369.

³⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1257a.

³⁷⁸ Olson, “Dicaeopolis’ Motivations in Aristophanes’ Acharnians,” 202.

faced with ideal market conditions given Pericles' decree. The Athenian market and the markets of all the Athenian allies were closed to the Megarian. At least in Dikaiopolis' agora the Megarian receives something for his products, no matter how meagre.³⁷⁹

But even if we were to assume that Dikaiopolis gives the salt and garlic in the knowledge that he was receiving human girls, this by no means reduces the "fairness" of the transaction as evident by the fact that the girls will be fed and not starved to death. This leads Strauss to write: "The bargain is then not as beastly as it appears at first sight. Dikaiopolis is in his way, as his name so clearly indicates, a just man."³⁸⁰ That being said, Strauss then does something peculiar; he proceeds with a line of reasoning that reinforces the notion that Dikaiopolis' transaction is selfish. He writes:

But his [Dikaiopolis] justice is not free from ambiguity. The Megarian speaks of his children, his wife and his city; Dikaiopolis does not speak of his children, his wife, and his city: He buys the Megarian's young pigs for himself alone; he uses his private market for his most private end. The bargain is consummated, thanks to the abstraction from what is revealed by sight and touch, as distinguished from hearing and words. This goes much beyond Dikaiopolis' tasting and smelling the *spondai*.³⁸¹

Strauss' argument (as it stands) presents a formidable obstacle. One solution would be to attempt to repudiate Strauss' sceptical argument in order to save my argument: (i.e., that the Megarian passage is in reality a compassionate, non-selfish passage). Before

³⁷⁹ Additionally, we should not forget that Dikaiopolis has to feed his "piglets" plenty of figs and peas; an obvious "waste of money" (737) since they will never be sacrificed. The girls (no doubt) would have discarded their disguise at an opportune time, much the same way that Dikaiopolis discarded his own disguise at the opportune time (595).

³⁸⁰ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 71.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

proceeding, however, I would like to direct the readers to Strauss' concluding remarks on the *Acharnians*. Here, Strauss juxtaposes Dikaiopolis' justice to the justice of the polis and writes: "Dikaiopolis deserves his name. In other words, he is just because he does what the just city does – the just city too takes care only of itself, or does not meddle with other cities."³⁸² For clarification purposes, Strauss is probably referring to line 833 where Dikaiopolis says to the Megarian, "If I was being meddlesome, let it be on my head (*polupragmosunē nun es kephalēn trapoit' emoi*)" (833), following the incident with the Athenian Sycophant. According to Henderson, interference in other states' internal affairs seems to have been a popular criticism reserved for Athens; at which point Dikaiopolis' utterance takes on added political significance.³⁸³ To be precise, Dikaiopolis chastises himself for the sins of his city, in front of the city. Dikaiopolis by his own volition, takes upon himself the sins of the body politik in a cathartic endeavour.

Be that as it may, the above is still inadequate. With that in mind, we continue with a lengthy quote from Strauss' concluding remarks to the *Acharnians*.

Dikaiopolis, who can take care of himself and takes care only of himself, is by the manner in which he takes care only of himself – i.e., by merely enjoying himself to the highest degree, by doing what his nature compels him to do – the greatest benefactor of the city; for who can doubt that the comic poet enjoyed himself to the highest degree in conceiving and elaborating his comedies? Yet this enjoyment necessarily communicates itself. Comedy, whose mother is laughter, gives birth to laughter. The comic poet's enjoyment is essentially social, although it is not simply political; it is akin in different ways to the enjoyment deriving from wine and from sex, rather than to the enjoyment deriving from food, however delicious. The enjoyments to which Dikaiopolis eventually turns are, apart from what they are in themselves, the comical equivalent of the enjoyment from comedies. By exciting the desire for these enjoyments of the senses, he makes his

³⁸² Ibid, 77.

³⁸³ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 161, n. 102.

fellow citizens gay, desirous of living, hence desirous of peace (a common good), just...To state it crudely, “tragedy dissolves life, but comedy makes it firm.”³⁸⁴

From the above we can observe that Strauss, while still retaining that Dikaiopolis pursues his private means and takes care only of himself, concludes that the ultimate result of Dikaiopolis’ endeavour is a life-affirming stance conducive to peace talks. This conclusion, it should be noted, is quite distinct from other scholars who also hold that Dikaiopolis pursues private ends, but conclude that the city derives nothing from him.³⁸⁵ The second point of Strauss’ argument could very well serve as the synopsis of this entire dissertation.

Yet, as much as I agree with Strauss’ conclusion, I find his assumption that Dikaiopolis selfishly pursues his “private ends” with no thought for his family or wife in the Megarian passage unsettling; it runs contra to my argument that Dikaiopolis is a caring, compassionate, empathetic person. Luck would have it that recent research in classical philology has shed some new light on the Megarian passage that in turns necessitates a re-evaluation of previously stated hypothesis, including the one by Strauss that Dikaiopolis is exhibiting selfish tendencies in the Megarian scene. In a brief but informative essay, Mike Lippman explains that Aristophanes makes numerous uses of “an unusual verbal manifestation” of the word *megara*.³⁸⁶ Since scholars had always assumed

³⁸⁴ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 77.

³⁸⁵ Authors who argue Dikaiopolis utilizes his private peace for his private ends without of any thought for Athens’ well-being include: Bowie, “The Parabasis in Aristophanes: Prolegomena, Acharnians,” 38; Bowie, “Who is Dicaeopolis,” 184 and Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 87-8, among others.

³⁸⁶ Lippman, “This Little Piggie went to the Megara...,” 2006.

that any derivatives of this word in lines 729-835 were in reference to the city-state of Megara, not much attention has been given to the Megarian's claim that the "piggies" were for the Mysteries. Moreover, what little attention has been given, especially to the suggestion that the piglets were a suitable sacrifice to Aphrodite, was seen by scholars as further evidence of Dikaiopolis selfish hedonism. Granted that Aristophanes was utilizing tantalizing puns and suggestive sexual imagery for his male audience with the objective of making them gay - "desirous of living" and "hence desirous of peace", as Strauss puts it - more could be said on this topic.

According to Lippman, the *megara* were pits into which women threw various religious offerings during the second day of the *Thesmophoria*.³⁸⁷ The same author is of the mind that Aristophanes uses puns on a number of points in lines 719-859. One such point is the hunger of the Megarians (751) which is contrasted to the ritual fasting that women had to undertake in preparation for the *Thesmophoria*. Another point is the reference/pun between the girls/piglets private parts and the fertility symbolism of the sacrificial piglets. This leads Lippman to suggest that this makes the Megarian episode much "less vulgar" than presently thought in the literature. All of the above reveal a strong relationship between the Megarian passage and the *Thesmophoria*. We now turn our attention to this religious ritual for reasons that will soon become apparent.

The *Thesmophoria*, from *thesmoi* or laws dictating the cultivation of the land, were held in honour of Demeter in commemoration of her grief over the loss of her daughter, Persephone, to the underworld. This ritual was exclusive to married women

³⁸⁷ Due to the secretive nature of this ritual we know little, mostly from the writings of a scholiast on Lucian (*Dialogue Meretricii* 2.1).

with men, children and unmarried women being barred from attendance. The *Thesmophoria* lasted for three days and during this time women retrieved sacred offerings, including the remains of sacrificial piglets, from the *megara*. Those remains were mixed with seeds and planted in the soil in a fertility ritual that has been described by Walter Burkert as a form of primitive agrarian magic.³⁸⁸

Burkert also paints a dark picture of the same ritual by arguing that the “women were occupied with blood and death [and] rage which demands sacrifices.”³⁸⁹ This argument, however, is not entirely convincing. Sacrifices were practiced by many ancient cultures and were mostly acts of gratitude and atonement, not of anger. In defence of this argument, it should be noted that the women attending the *Thesmophoria* refrained from eating pomegranates, a fruit that sprung from the blood of Dionysus when he was dismembered. If there is a connection to be found between Dionysus in the *Thesphoria*, is it not (perhaps) possible that it is with Dionysus the *Meilichios*?³⁹⁰ Indeed, we are told that a spirit of gaiety, ribald laughter and “outraged talk” (*loidoria*) dominated the

³⁸⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, 244.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Is there a link between the figure of Dionysus the *Meilichios* (Sweet as Honey) and poetic possession? In Plato’s *Ion* (533e-534a) one finds an allegory being drawn between Corybantic frenzy and lyric poets, with the claim being made that when poets “launch into melody and rhythm, they are frantic and possessed, like Bacchic dancers who draw honey and milk from rivers”. This, in turn, is echoed by Nietzsche in his discussion of Bacchic dancers where he writes: “Just as the animals now talk and the earth yields milk and honey, so there sounds from him something supernatural: he feels himself a God, he himself walks about ecstatic and uplifted (*BT* §1) (see Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche’s Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 75.

Thesmophoria.³⁹¹ Now, it would seem to me, that where one finds ribald laughter one is unlikely to also find bloodthirsty anger.

Of interest to our discussion is also the fact that the *Thesmophorion* was adjacent to the Athenian Assembly. Of even greater interest is the fact that if an Assembly meeting coincided with the days of the *Thesmophoria*, the men did not hold their meeting in the Pnyx but moved instead to the Theatre of Dionysus. This leads John Winkler to comment that the “men’s political business was displaced by the women’s higher duties to Demeter and her grain.”³⁹² In other words, the *thesmoi* (laws) governing agriculture took precedence over the laws governing the state.

Based on all the above, let us now return to the Megarian passage. The Megarian father and his two young girls arrive at Dikaiopolis’ agora “fasting”, as the Megarian ironically puts it (751). The fasting of the Megarians, however, unlike the fasting of the women preparing for the *Thesmophoria*, is not voluntary. The Megarian father offers to trade his first daughter as a sacrificial piglet for the Mysteries (*mystērīkōn*) (747). In the *Thesmophoria* piglets were killed in a ritual seeking the fertility of earth; a ritual that saw the placement of seeds into the nourishing folds of the earth in the hopes that it would take root and begin to grow, blossom, and bear fruit. Those fruits - the grains, the grapes, the olives - was what had been sustaining the people of Attica for countless centuries.

Next, the Megarian father offers to trade his second daughter/piglet as sacrifice to Aphrodite, the goddess of Eros. Hence, whereas the first piglet goes to Demeter and thus ensures the impregnation of earth and animals, the second piglet goes to Aphrodite and

³⁹¹ Winkler, *The Constrains of Desire: The Anthology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, 194.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

thus ensures the impregnation of the human-female womb. Dikaiopolis offers to trade (not to buy) salt and garlic in exchange for the piglets. The Megarian departs happy with the understanding that while he traded his daughters as sacrificial piglets, they will not be sacrificed, rather they will be fed and not starve to death (734) (to say nothing about the salt and garlic that he receives).

Hence, Dikaiopolis obtains the piglets not with the intention of eating them and thereby enjoying them, literally or figuratively (in various levels). Rather, he obtains them with the intention of giving them to his wife. Thus, Dikaiopolis might not speak of his wife, as Strauss argues, but this does not mean that he is not *thinking* about his wife. Furthermore, by obtaining the piglets for the mysteries, Dikaiopolis obeys the unwritten ancestral laws of his land: he provides his wife with the necessary sacraments for the agrarian rituals. Thus, Dikaiopolis performs at the individual level what was usually performed at the collective level (i.e., the provision of piglets for the *Thesmophoria* was the responsibility of the male-administered polis).

To be sure, Dikaiopolis does far more than that; By signing a peace treaty he ensures that his wife's labours are not wasted. To explain, the fasting that his wife had to undergo in the area of food, wine and sexual intercourse, was meaningless during wartime. The nourishment that the seeds drew from the earth in the spring, was wasted in the summer when the vineyards and the fields of grain were burned. While the Athenian women obeyed the *thesmoi* (laws) dictating the cultivation of the land, the Athenian men did not aid their women in that task. Providing the piglets for the *Thesmophoria* was essential but not sufficient on the part of the male polis. Once the seeds had taken root it was the men's responsibility to ensure their safety, and in that responsibility the Athenian men failed miserably under the leadership of Pericles.

Invariably, much of this criticism is traced back to the rejection of Amphitheos, (Demeter's and Triptolemus' descendant) by the Athenian Assembly (54-5).³⁹³ At the risk of repeating myself, Pericles' heavy-handedness with Megara ushered in the war. Once that war began, the fate of the Attic land became sealed. The higher duties of women to Demeter and her grain became displaced by the men's political business to Poseidon and Ares, the War-God.³⁹⁴

If we may briefly revisit the first part of the play when the Acharnian Chorus speaks with anger about their slashed vines (226-31), it could be said that their cry is also the silent cry of the *Thesmophoria* devotees. Similar to the Acharnian Chorus, Dikaiopolis wanted to put a stop to the ravaging of the countryside because his vineyards were also destroyed during the enemy raids. However, the Acharnian Chorus and Dikaiopolis differed in their proposed solutions. The Acharnian Chorus was demanding a land battle with the Spartans. Realizing the suicidal nature of this demand, Dikaiopolis was demanding instead negotiated peace talks.

Another reason that Dikaiopolis rejects war is because war leads to the destruction of a far more precious harvest: the fruits of the female womb. This is best observed in the words of an enraged Lysistrata (Disbander of Armies) who lashes out at the Magistrate in the eponymous play with the utterance: "we bear sons who go off to fight far away..." (589). The Magistrate interrupts Lysistrata's speech with the words: "Enough! Don't open

³⁹³ The second part of this *trugōdia* is inexorably tied to the first part; Dikaiopolis' apology acts as the dividing line between the two parts.

³⁹⁴ The sea-god, Poseidon, personified Athenian naval power. That naval power was used by Athens to acquire her empire.

old wounds” (590).³⁹⁵ Of course there was no need for Lysistrata to finish her sentence; the audience knew that she was referring to the Sicilian expedition; a massacre that decimated the Athenian male population.

As the Megarian trader departs the Chorus has nothing but praise for Dikaiopolis’ sovereign agora.

Chorus: The man is truly blessed
Didn’t you hear how his enterprising plan is progressing?
The man will reap a bumper crop by sitting in his market.
And if some Ctesias intrudes³⁹⁶
or any other informer,
he’ll groan when he sits down.

Nor will anyone else vex you
by cutting into the queue,
nor will Prepis smear off³⁹⁷
his wide arse on you,
nor will you bump into Cleonymous;
you’ll saunter through your market wearing a bright
cloak,
and Hyperbolus won’t run into you³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ The character of Lysistrata was probably inspired by Lysimache (Disbander of Battle), the Priestess of Athena the Polias, the protector of Athens (Joan Breton Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 63). Lysistrata was also the first female protagonist in the history of Old, Middle and New Comedy.

³⁹⁶ An actual name but an unknown person signifying perhaps a generic comic name (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 198, n. 839; Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 162, n. 103)

³⁹⁷ The scholia identify him as the son of Eupherus, and as a Council Secretary in 422/1 (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 162, n. 104).

and infect you with his lawsuits.

Nor in your market will you meet
Cratinus strolling about,³⁹⁹
with an adulterer's cut
done with a straight razor⁴⁰⁰
an Artemon "the miscarried", (850)
too hasty with his poetry,
his armpits smelling nasty,
son of the father from the Goat d'Azur.

Nor again in your market
will the thoroughly depraved Pauson ridicule you,
nor will Lysistratus,

³⁹⁸ Son of Antiphanes of the deme Perithoidae, and the owner of a lamp-making business. Fragments from Cratinus (fr. 262) and Eupolis (fr. 238) suggest that he had made a "precocious start" on a political career, and eventually became the political successor of Kleon, following the latter's death in 422. Hyperbolus was extremely litigious, bringing many people to the courts with various accusations to the point where his name became synonymous with litigation leading to the proverb "More litigious than Hyperbolus" (Apostolius 17.68). He was banished from Athens by ostracism as a result of a temporary coalition between Nicias and Alcibiades "each of whom would otherwise have been in danger of banishment themselves" (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 198, n. 846; Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 163, n. 105).

³⁹⁹ The supposed exclusion of Cratinus from Dikaiopolis' agora needs to be taken with a great deal of scepticism. Notwithstanding the rivalry between Aristophanes and Cratinus, the latter was competing against the former in the same festival. However, even if we were to insist on a literal, non-ironic reading, I would argue, that these lines do not advocate the expulsion of Cratinus but rather the expulsion of Cratinus' *actions*, namely, adultery with a married Athenian woman. In more general terms, these lines could also be seen as a chastisement towards Cratinus for a lack of erotic self-restraint leading to indulgence in sexual activities that were destabilizing to the fabric of civil society.

⁴⁰⁰ Referring to a degrading form of depilation meted out to adulterers (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 164, n. 107). An alternative interpretation is that this was a fashionable hairstyle "associated with young men with the implication being that Cratinus was an "old roué trying to deceive himself into imagining he is still young" (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 199, n. 849).

the disgrace of Cholargus, (855)
soaked in the slough of despond,
ever freezing and starving
more than thirty days
in every month (859).

The above brings the following response from Strauss:

The exhausted old Acharnians are now reduced to the status of mere spectators. They call Dikaiopolis blessed, with a view to the fact that he gathers the fruits of his peace while sitting in the market. Freed from the evils of war, he spends his time in the market, in the *agora*, like the products of the new education blamed by the Just Speech and praised by the Unjust Speech. But the market in which he sits, being his private market, is far superior to the market place proper; the unpleasant and hateworthy fellows who disgrace the *agora* are not admitted to Dikaiopolis' market. The central type of man that is excluded from Dikaiopolis' market consists of bad poets and musicians.⁴⁰¹

In addition to excluding bad poets and musicians, as Strauss points out, Dikaiopolis also excludes Lamarchus and sycophants from his agora with the help of the leather straps (723). Dikaiopolis banishes the sycophants from his agora because they are *kakon* (bad) for his agora and for Athens (829).

How were these sycophants a "*kakon*" one asks? In literal translation, the word *sycophant* means to expose or reveal figs, from *sycon* (fig) and *phantas* (related to *phainein*).⁴⁰² The original meaning probably had something to do with people engaging in the theft and/or illegal exportation of figs, a major food staple in ancient Greece. In later times however, and especially during the Athenian democracy, this label was attributed to

⁴⁰¹ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 74.

⁴⁰² In the majority of translations the word sycophant is rendered as "informer"; a somewhat misleading term.

unscrupulous people who used the courts for personal gain.⁴⁰³ Supposedly, sycophants were men who targeted wealthy men with threats of litigations. Since the juries consisted mostly of poor people who delivered guilty verdicts out of jealousy or spite for the upper class, it is said that the victims, rather than facing a jury (and hence risk paying large fines), preferred instead to pay off the sycophants. This has led some scholars to argue that (a) the sycophants had considerable power in Athens, and (b) democracy “was the soil in which sycophancy flourished”.⁴⁰⁴ Interesting as the relationship between democracy and sycophancy may be, it is sycophancy and the politics of anger that is relevant to our study. Prior to delving deeper into this subject, however, it would be beneficial to also provide the passage dealing with the Theban trader.

⁴⁰³ Lofberg, “The Sycophant-Parasite,” 61.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 63. For instance, in the *Athenaion Politeia* 1.14, one finds the suggestion that the entire demos was sycophantic. On sycophancy as a class struggle see Matthew R. Christ “Ostracism, Sycophancy, and Deception of the Demos: [Arist.] Ath. Pol”, *The Classical Quarterly* 42/2 (1992), 336-346, 344. For an opposing view, see Brad L. Cook, Book Review: Matthew R. Christ, *The Litigious Athenian* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2000.01.10 <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2000/2000-01-10.html>, who argues that the sycophant became “a phantasmic social vampire” that was “used as a scapegoat for the supposed failings of the Athenian democracy”.

5.2 The Theban Trader: Lines 860-958

[*A Theban enters the stage accompanied by his slave Ismenias. Both master and slave are carrying wares and are accompanied by Pipers*]

Theban: Heracles bear witness,⁴⁰⁵ my shoulder's damned weary (860). Put the pennyroyal down easy, Ismenias. And all of you pipers who are with me from Thebes, puff on those bones to the tune of the "The Dog's Arsehole."

[*Dikaiopolis hearing all the music outside his house, comes out clearly irritated*]

Dikaiopolis: Stop! Damn you (*es korakas*)! Away from my door, your hornets! Where did these dadblasted buzzpipers fly to my door from, these sons of Chaeris? (866)

Theban: By Iolaus,⁴⁰⁶ you've done me a favour there, friend. All the way from Thebes they've been puffing behind me and blowing my pennyroyal blossoms to the ground. But if you like, buy some of the goods I've got, some fowl or some four-wingers (871).

Dikaiopolis: Welcome, my baguette-eating Boetian!⁴⁰⁷ What have you got?

Theban: Just everything good that the Boetians have marjoram, pennyroyal, rush mats, lamp wicks,⁴⁰⁸ ducks, jackdaws, francolins, coots, wrens, grebes.

Dikaiopolis: Then you've hit my market like a fowl nor'easter!

Theban: I've also got geese, hares, foxes, moles, hedgehogs, cats, badgers, martens, otters, Copaic eels.⁴⁰⁹

Dikaiopolis: O you who bring mankind's most delectable cutlet, permit me to greet the eels, if you've got them!

Theban: [*Producing an eel*] Most venerable mistress of fifty Copaic maidens, step forth here and grant your favours to our host!

Dikaiopolis: O dearest and long desired, you have come, the heart's desire of *trugōdikois* choruses and dear to Morychus! Servants, fetch me forth the brazier and the fan. [*These items are brought forth, followed by Dikaiopolis' children*] Children, look at the excellent eel we've been pining for, just arrived after six years. Say hello to her kids, and in honour of this lady guest I'll provide you with coals. Now place her on her bier, "for even in death may I never be parted from you," enshrouded in beet! (894)

Theban: And how am I going to be paid for her?

Dikaiopolis: I guess you'll give her to me as market tax. But if you're selling any of these other things, speak up.

⁴⁰⁵ Since Heracles was born in Thebes, the Thebans had a special affinity for this hero (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 200, n. 860)

⁴⁰⁶ Nephew and companion of Heracles (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 200, n. 867).

⁴⁰⁷ Thebes was the capital of the Boetia.

⁴⁰⁸ Double phallic meaning (i.e., penis).

⁴⁰⁹ A delicacy named after Lake Copais in northeast Boetia (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 169, n. 113).

Theban: I'm selling everything here.

Dikaiopolis: All right, name your price. Or will you take an equivalent load from here back home with you?

Theban: I will! Something that's found in Athens but not among the Boetians (900).

Dikaiopolis: You'll probably want to buy some sprats from Phalerum to take with you, or pottery.

Theban: Sprats or pottery? We have them back home. No, something that's absent among us, but plentiful here.

Dikaiopolis: I've got it! A sycophant; pack him up like crockery and export him.

Theban: Twin Gods, (905) I'd surely make a sizable profit for importing one - one filled with lots of deviltry, like a monkey.

Dikaiopolis: Hey, look here: Nicarchus is coming to expose us.

[Enter Nicarchus]

Theban: He's not very big.

Dikaiopolis: But all of him is bad (*kakon*).

Nicarchus: [Laying his hand on the Theban's sack] These ware, whose are they?

Theban: They're mine, from Thebes, as Zeus is my witness (910).

Nicarchus: In that case, I hereby expose (*phaino*) them as enemy goods (*polemia*).

Theban: What's the matter (*kakon*) with you declaring war (*polemon*) and battle on my birdies?

Dikaiopolis: And in addition to these, I shall expose you.

Theban: What injustice have I done to you? (*ti adikeimenos*);⁴¹⁰

Nicarchus: I'll explain it to you for the bystanders' benefit (915). You're importing lamp wicks from hostile (*polemiōn*) territory.

Dikaiopolis: So you're actually exposing him because of a lamp wick?

Nicarchus: [Holding up a wick] This could burn up the shipyard!

Dikaiopolis: A wick burn up a shipyard?

Nicarchus: I reckon.

Dikaiopolis: In what way?

Nicarchus: A man from Boetia could put it in a beetle's back, (920) light it, and send it into the shipyard through a water main, waiting for a great (*megan*) north wind.⁴¹¹ And if the fire once caught the ships, they'd be ablaze in no time.

Dikaiopolis: [Hitting Nicarchus with his leather straps] Damn and blast you, they'd be ablaze from a beetle and a wick? (925)

Nicarchus: I call witnesses!

Dikaiopolis: Arrest his mouth. [To a slave] Give me some sawdust so I can pack him like pottery before I hand him over, so he won't get broken in transit.

⁴¹⁰ Sommerstein: "What wrong am I doing you?"; Henderson: "What have I done to you?"

⁴¹¹ In all probability Aristophanes is insinuating on *megan*, as in great erection or perhaps large penis; like Lysistrata in the eponymous play.

Lysistrata: It's big (*mega*)

Kalonike: Not juicy as well?

Lysistrata: Oh yes, it's big and juicy.

Kalonike: Then how come we're not all here? [i.e., women] (23-4).

[*Dikaiopolis begins to pack up the screaming Nicarchus*]

Chorus Leader: Dear fellow, pack the merchandise (*strophe*)
nicely for our foreign friend (930)
so that he can carry it
without breaking it.

Dikaiopolis: I'll take care of that, because –
listen - it makes a chattering
and fire-cracked noise,
altogether godforsaken.

Chorus Leader: Whatever will he use it for?

Dikaiopolis: It will be a pot for every purpose:
A bowl for mixing evils (*kakōn*), a mortar for pounding
lawsuits,
a lampstand to expose outgoing officials,
and a cup
for blending trouble.

Chorus Leader: But how could anyone feel safe (*antistrophe*)
using a pot like this (941)
in the house,
when it's always making so much noise?

Dikaiopolis: It's sturdy, sir, so
it will never get broken,
even if its hung head-downwards
by its feet (945).

Chorus Leader: [*To the Theban*] You're all set now!

Theban: I'll surely rake in a profit!

Chorus Leader: Rake away, most excellent guest;
toss him onto your load
and take him wherever you want,
a sycophant for every occasion.

Dikaiopolis: I had my hands full packing up the blasted wretch. Now take your pottery
and load it up, Boetian.

Theban: Come here and get your shoulder under it, Ismenichus.

Dikaiopolis: Make sure you carry him back carefully (955). You certainly won't be
carrying anything wholesome, but no matter. And if you make a profit importing this
shipment, you'll make a fortune in the *sycophantōn* trade!

[*Theban departs*]

In the Theban passage the element of sycophancy is even more pronounced than the Megarian passage. Keeping that mind we now turn our attention to the element of *sycophantia* and the politics of anger. Danielle Allen draws a particularly strong connection between sycophancy and the politics of anger by using the thread of sexual

activity associated with the fig (*sycon*), a fruit which was associated with sexuality. Allen begins her discussion by establishing a link between figs, as a euphemism for testicles and *orge*.⁴¹² We begin with *orge*. This word is correctly identified as a passion, and as one that refers both to anger and sexual lust.⁴¹³ As a passion, *orge* motivates a “desire to change social relationships” either by destroying them (anger manifestation) or by creating them (erotic manifestation). As the impulses to destruction and creation are intertwined with each other, so are the passions of anger and eros. Figs are said to be representative both of the “iretic and the erotic elements of *orge*.”⁴¹⁴ Aristophanes, the argument continues, utilized to its full potential the multiplicity of meanings attached to the figure of figs. Aristophanes is said to have appreciated, like Xenophon in the *Oeconomicus* (19.07-19), that the harvesting of figs, similar to that of vines (*orchos*)⁴¹⁵ had to occur at the right time when the fruit was ripe and sweet; Too early a harvest and the result would have been a hard, bitter fruit. In other words, there was “a right time and method for the exposure of ripe figs or *orge*”, just as there “were rules against improper exposure in the sexual context.”⁴¹⁶

The problem with the sycophants, it is argued, is that they showed their “figs” or “manly vigor” inappropriately by shaming other people via the exposure of private details

⁴¹² Within this interpretation the feeding of figs to the Megarian piglets by Dikaiopolis takes on a more mischievous (and at the same time a more ritualistic) meaning.

⁴¹³ Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens*, 164. The following discussion relies heavily on this author’s work.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, 162.

⁴¹⁵ Another pun for testicles (*orchis*).

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*.

about their lives that should have been kept out of the public eye. Ultimately, the sycophant is said to have stood guilty of violating “the economy of desire by initiating processes of anger” when the time and situation was inappropriate. The sycophant, the argument continues, “essentially misused the lust of prosecutorial anger (by faking it, overindulging it, or accepting money for it) by violating democratic norms of public agency.”⁴¹⁷

There are a number of comments that we are now in a position to make. For instance, in terms of the Megarian passage we can now suggest that the figs that Dikaiopolis gives to the Megarian piglets (804-8) entail an erotic, and therefore a creative, manifestation of *orge*. As a result, Dikaiopolis’ “figs” entail a desire to change the political relationship between Athens and Megara from a negative to a positive standing. On the other hand, the *orge* of the anonymous Athenian sycophant is an iretic manifestation and therefore a destructive one; one that entails maintaining the existing negative political relationship between Athens and Megara.

Dikaiopolis’ attempt to “clean” his agora from sycophants is in reality an allegorical attempt at cleaning Athens from sycophants. Pericles, according to Dikaiopoleian thinking, was the first Athenian to display an Olympian-like *orge* (*orgē Perikleēs oulumpios*) (529) towards Megara. Pericles’ *orge* was iretic and therefore destructive, and while political in origin the same *orge* was manifested by means of an economic venue; the Athenian agora. In the end, Dikaiopolis’ agora is the exact opposite of the Periclean agora. Whereas Pericles declares the Athenian agora closed to Megarians (533-4), Dikaiopolis declares his agora open to them (623-5).

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 166.

On the same topic but from a different perspective, one begins to observe the emergence of a deliberate contrast between the first and the second part of the play. In the first part of the play, the theatre audience observes Dikaiopolis as he goes about “exposing” the Persians as offering nothing to Athens (103) and the Thracians as being overpaid, untrustworthy mercenaries (161). Thus, from an economic viewpoint, Dikaiopolis demonstrates that any dealings with either party would be detrimental to Athenian interests.

In the second part of the play, Dikaiopolis manages to negotiate with the Megarian and Theban alike, deals that are not only beneficial to him but to Athens as well. For instance, Dikaiopolis obtains sacrificial piglets for the Mysteries and delicacies for the Festival of the Pitchers. Megara and Thebes are shown to benefit from these transactions as well. In the case of Thebes this is not as evident as in the case of Megara. After all the exchange of eels for one Athenian sycophant does not seem very beneficial to Thebes. However, if one contrasts it with Theoros’ proposal to obliterate all of Boetia by the use of Thracian mercenaries (159-60), one begins to see the virtue in Dikaiopolis’ offer.

In the end, Dikaiopolis comes out as a pan-Hellenic, reconciliatory figure that benefits Athens and fellow Hellenic city-states alike. While Cleistenes and Theoros are also shown as “attempting” to benefit Athens, they are depicted as having the opposite effect. At this point it becomes apparent that the failure of Dikaiopolis to expose the Persians and Thracians in the Assembly was a deliberate dramatic ploy on Aristophanes’ part. By “allowing” Dikaiopolis to fail in the Athenian Assembly, Aristophanes makes it possible for Dikaiopolis to succeed in his private agora. By so doing, Aristophanes is then

able to contrast the policies of the war party with the policies of the peace party and so demonstrate to the audience that the policies of the peace party are more advantageous to Athens and Hellas as a whole.

It should be noted that the above conclusion runs contrary to the claims found in the literature which assert that the market transactions mark the apex of Dikaiopolis' hedonistic injustice. For instance, Segal argues that Dikaiopolis' motives are so "egocentric and personal that they are downright selfish"⁴¹⁸ while Compton-Engle argues that Dikaiopolis is transformed from a "helpless farmer overwhelmed by the tricks of city trade" to a "master of the agora."⁴¹⁹ However, it would seem to me that, what we are witnessing is neither an act of selfishness nor a personality change on the part of Dikaiopolis. Rather it is a carefully thought-out script on the part of Aristophanes contrasting two different types of foreign policies, namely, war and peace policies and their respective economic effects.

5.3 The Justice of Dionysus in Dikaiopolis' Agora: Lines 959-1068

As soon as the Theban trader departs, a slave of Lamachus enters and demands food for the upcoming Festival of the Choes (Pitchers).

Slave: Dikaiopolis!

Dikaiopolis: Who's that? Why are you yelling for me?

Slave: Why? Lamachus orders you, for this drachma here, (960) to give him some of your thrushes for the Pitcher Feast, and he orders a Copaic eel for three drachmas.

⁴¹⁸ Segal, *The Death of Comedy*, 113.

⁴¹⁹ Compton-Engle, "From Country to City: The Persona of Dicaeopolis in Aristophanes' "Acharnians"", 369.

Dikaiopolis: Which Lamachus is it who orders the eel?

Slave: Lamachus the awesome (*o deinos*), the tough as leather, who brandishes the Gorgon as he shakes ‘three overshadowing crests’ (965).

Dikaiopolis: No deal, by Zeus, not even if he gave me his shield.⁴²⁰ Let him shake his crest for salt fish. And if he squawks about it, I’ll summon the commissioners. [*Slave runs away.*] I’ll take this load for myself and go inside, lofted on wings of thrushes and blackbirds (970).

[*Dikaiopolis goes inside his house, the Chorus is left alone in the stage*]

Chorus: Have you seen him, all of you people, the *phronimon* and *ypersophon*⁴²¹ man, (*strophe*)

seen what fine merchandice, thanks to his truce,
he’s got for sale?

some of his things are useful
around the house, while others
should be eaten hot.

Chorus Leader: To this man all bounties (*agatha*) are supplied spontaneously (*automata*). I will never welcome the War God (*Polemon*) into my house, nor will he ever recline at my side and sing the Harmodious Song (980), for he is an unruly fellow when he drinks (*paroinikos*). When we enjoyed every bounty, he crashed our party and inflicted all kinds of damage, upending, spilling, and fighting; and the more I kept inviting him “to drink, recline, take this cup of fellowship (*philotēsian*)” (985), the more he kept setting our vine props afire and violently (*bia*) spilling the wine from our vines.

Chorus: He’s in flight to his dinner (*antistrophe*)

And grand indeed are his thoughts;

As a token of his life style

He’s tossed out these feathers before his door.

O Reconciliation (*Diallagē*), friend-companion (*philais*)

Of Cypris the fair (*te kalē*)⁴²²

And the beloved Graces,

Chorus Leader: I didn’t realize what a lovely face you have. How I wish that some Eros, like the one in the painting who wears a garland of rosettes, could bring you and me together! Or perhaps you think I’m an absolute geezer (*gerontion*)? Ah but if I got hold of you, I think I could still strike home three times. First, I’d shove in a long rank of tender vines, and besides that some fresh fig shoots (995) and thirdly a well hung vine branch – this oldster would! – and, around the whole plot, a stand of olive trees, so that you and I could anoint ourselves for the New Moon Feasts.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Notice Dikaiopolis’ mischievous sense of humour in this remark in lieu of lines 550-3 (i.e., when he vomits inside Lamachus’ shield).

⁴²¹ Sommerstein: “surpassing cleverness”; Henderson: “exceedingly sagacious”.

⁴²² Alluding to Aphrodite by way of her birthplace, the island of Cyprus.

⁴²³ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 184, n. 126, writes that the “first day of the month was an occasion for religious and social festivities.”

[Enter Herald]

Herald: Hear this people! According to ancestral custom of the Choes (1000), drink your pitchers when the trumpet sounds, and whoever is the very first to drink up will win a Ctesiphon-size wineskin!⁴²⁴

[The eccyclema is rolled out, revealing Dikaiopolis' Slaves and womenfolk as they prepare the feast. Dikaiopolis comes running from inside the house]

Dikaiopolis: You slaves, you women, didn't you hear? What are you doing? Don't you hear the herald? Braise the hare fillets, roast them, turn them, pull them off the skewers quickly (1005), string the garlands. Hand me the skewers, so I can spit the thrushes!

Chorus: I envy you your well laid plan (*euboulias*), (*strophe*) and more so your well laid table, sit, here before us (1010).

Dikaiopolis: What will you say when you see the thrushes being roasted!

Chorus: You're right about that too, I think.

Dikaiopolis: Start poking up the fire!

Chorus: Did you hear how master-chef-ily (1015) how subtly and how gourmettily he caters for himself?

[Enters Dercetes, an Athenian, sobbing]

Dercetes: O woe is me!

Dikaiopolis: Heracles! Who's this?

Dercetes: A man ill-fated! (*anēr kakodaimon*)

Dikaiopolis: Then keep it to yourself.

Dercetes: Dear friend, since you've got a truce all to yourself (1020) measure out some peace for me, even it's only five years' worth.

Dikaiopolis: What's the matter?

Dercetes: I am shattered; I've lost my pair of oxen!

Dikaiopolis: Where?

Dercetes: At Phyle; the Boetians rustled them.

Dikaiopolis: Thrice ill-fated man! And you're still wearing white clothes?

Dercetes: And by god, those two supported me with all the manure I could want! (1025)

Dikaiopolis: So what do you want now?

Dercetes: I've ruined my eyes, sobbing for my oxen. But if you care at all for Dercetes of Phyle,⁴²⁵ anoint my eyes with some peace, right away!

Dikaiopolis: You rascal, I'm not a public doctor! (1030)

Dercetes: Come on, I'm begging you; then maybe I can recover my oxen!

Dikaiopolis: Impossible. Go squawk to Pittalus' people.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ A man whose only claim to glory was his huge belly (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 185, n. 127).

⁴²⁵ According to Henderson, the name means "bright-eyes" and is therefore comic under the context. But according to the same author, there was also a contemporary named Dercetes of Phyle who was a war supporter (*Acharnians/Knights*, 189, n. 128).

Dercetes: No, please drip me just one drop of peace into this fennel stalk!

Dikaiopolis: Not even a teensy peep! Go and grieve somewhere else [*he returns to his cooking.*] (1035)

Dercetes: Ah (*oimoi*), poor me! My little beasts of burden! [*Dercetes trudges off*]

Chorus: The man's discovered in his treaty something delightful, and evidently won't share it with anyone.

Dikaiopolis: You, pour the honey on the sausage; (1040) grill the squid.

Chorus: Did you hear his ringing tones?

Dikaiopolis: Broil the eels.

Chorus: You'll starve us to death, me and my neighbours (1045), with the smell and with your voice too, shouting such orders.

Dikaiopolis: Broil these here, and grill these nicely. [*Enters a Best Man with a Bridesmaid*]

Best Man: Dikaiopolis!

Dikaiopolis: Who's that? Who's that?

Best Man: A bridegroom has sent you this meat from the wedding feast.

Dikaiopolis: A fine gesture, whoever he is (1050).

Best Man: And he asks you, in return for the meat – so he won't have to go on campaign but can stay home and screw – to pour just one spoonful of peace into this tube.

Dikaiopolis: Take the meat back, take it back and don't offer it to me! I wouldn't pour a drop for a thousand drachmas (1055). But who's this girl here?

Best Man: The bridesmaid, who wants to give you a private message from the bride.

Dikaiopolis: Well, now, what's your message?

[*The bridesmaid whispers something in his ear*]

Dear gods, how funny (*ōs geloion*) the bride's request is! Her very earnest request to me is, that her husband's cock be allowed to stay at home! (1060) Bring the treaty here; I'll give some to her and her alone; since she's a woman and doesn't deserve to suffer from the war. Hold the tube over here, this way, ma'am. Do you know how it's done? Tell the bride this: whenever they call up troops, she should rub her husband's cock at night with this (1066).

[*Best Man and Bridesmaid depart*]

Take the treaty away. Bring me the wine ladle, so I can draw wine and pour it into the pitchers.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ A public doctor. Evidently a certain number of doctors were paid by Athens to give free treatment to the poor (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 189, n. 129, 130).

⁴²⁷ In terms of the nature of these two festivals, Habash, "Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," 575, provides an insightful comparative summary.

We begin our discussion with Dikaiopolis' decision to deny Lamachus some thrushes and eels for the celebration of the Festival of the Choes. This denial becomes comprehensible only by understanding the significance of the Choes festival, the most ancient, most egalitarian, and most festive of Dionysian festivals. This particular festival took place on the second day of what was a three-day festival of the Anthesteria, one of four festivals held in honour of Dionysus. It was held in mid-winter and it was a festival celebrating the maturing of wines. The first day of the Anthesteria was named Pithoigia after the *pithoi* (casks) holding the wine. The second day was named Choes after the *choes* (pitchers) in which the wine was served.⁴²⁸ The third, and final day was called the Chytroi from *chytroi* (pots) and it was dedicated to the dead with offerings being made to Hermes and Dionysus.⁴²⁹

In the Rural Dionysia he [Dionysus] is invoked as the god of the seed. In contrast, the Choes rejoices in the blossoming of the seed....The procession of the Rural Dionysia is a celebration of peace and of the anticipated return of fertility... [the] Choes, by contrast, in its celebration of the fruits of fertility is boisterous and excessive in its pleasures...The Dionysiac festivals neatly complement one another. The Choes provides the occasion to fulfill what Dikaiopolis prays for and sings about during the Rural Dionysia..."

⁴²⁸ Immerwahr, "Choes and Chytroi," 245-60.

⁴²⁹ Although one assumes that the Chytroi had a more sober mood, this is far from confirmed in the literature. In Aristophanes' *Frogs* (211) the reader observes a festive mood for this day. Whether this was once a separate festival that became merged with the wine festival, or whether this festival is a testament to the "contradiction in the nature of Dionysus" whereby "the god who brings new life and ecstasy also rules over the realm of the dead and the fate of the soul" is unclear (Robertson, "Athens' Festival of the New Wine," 197).

During this festival there was singing, dancing, drinking contests and a state banquet in which guests were invited at the discretion of the High Priest of Dionysus.⁴³⁰ At the same festival social order was suspended and slaves (both private and state-owned) were allowed to participate in the eating and drinking. The Anthesteria was also the most ancient of all the Dionysian festivals. During the third and final day there was a “sacred marriage between the wife of the King Archon (the official in charge of the state religion) and Dionysus.”⁴³¹ According to one interpretation this marriage was meant to “cement the union of Dionysus with the state of Athens through the person of the queen.”⁴³² In other words, via this symbolic marriage: “Dionysus was annually received back into the community, just as he was also welcomed in the return of the vegetation and the opening of the new wine.”⁴³³

Taking into consideration the nature of the Festival of the Pitchers, Dikaiopolis’ refusal to sell food to Lamachus (something which would have allowed Lamachus to participate in the same festival) becomes easier to understand. Insofar as Lamachus is the personification of the war party, he does not deserve to celebrate this festival. Why? Because this festival had been disrupted since the outbreak of hostilities in 431 BC. With ravaging Peloponnesians destroying the Attic vineyards every summer, there was no

⁴³⁰ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 180, n. 119.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Farnell, *Cults V* 217, as quoted in Habash, “Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” 570.

⁴³³ Habash, “Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” 570. This being said, one cannot help but wonder if there is a connection between this ritual and the myth of Dionysus’ marriage to Ariadne, the Cretan princess that was abandoned by the Athenian king, Theseus.

wine. No doubt Athenians received wine from other parts of Greece, courtesy of their merchant navy; however, that wine was not harvested in Attica, and as a result there were no festivities. Consequently, for six long years Dionysus had not “cemented” his union with the state, nor had he been “received” or “welcomed” by Athens. The staging of the Choes in the *Acharnians* was probably the first time in six years that this festival was staged (albeit in dramatic format) in Attica.

The ritual and psychological ramifications of Dionysus’ absence cannot be overstressed. In an attempt to convey the importance of this we turn briefly to Nietzsche, the man who saw it fit to proclaim himself as “the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus”, for a powerful interpretation.⁴³⁴ He writes:

I was the first to take seriously, for the understanding of the older, the still rich and even overflowing Hellenic instinct, that wonderful phenomenon which bears the name of Dionysus: it is explicable only in terms of an *excess* of force...For it is only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, that the *basic fact* of the Hellenic instinct finds - its “will to life”. What was it that the Hellene guaranteed himself by means of these mysteries? Eternal life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change; *true* life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. For the Greeks the *sexual* symbol was therefore the venerable symbol par excellence, the real profundity in the whole of ancient piety. Every single element in the act of procreation, of pregnancy, and of birth aroused the highest and most solemn feelings. In the doctrine of the mysteries, pain is pronounced holy...All this is meant by the word Dionysus: I know no higher symbolism than this *Greek* symbolism of the Dionysian festivals. Here the most profound instinct of life, is experienced religiously – and the way to life, procreation, as the *holy* way.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ *Twilight of the Idols* “What I Owe to the Ancients” §5.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid* §4.

Ultimately, Aristophanes' fear was that this "eternal return of life" that was manifested in the figure of Dionysus was being jeopardized. The ravaging of the Attic land, and later of men (materialized in the Sicilian tragedy) was the driving force behind Aristophanes' "Cassandrian" plays. In all fairness, however, this was not only Aristophanes' fear. It was also the fear of Cratinus, Eupolis, Hermippus and many other Old Comedy poets, all of whom savagely attacked Pericles and the rest of the pro-war party.⁴³⁶ All these disciples of Dionysus did not attack these politicians simply because as comic playwrights it was their function to attack and satirize the prevailing powers (as one popular theory of comedy holds). Rather, the Old Comedy poets attacked the war party, because *Polemos* was anathema to Dionysus. Aristophanes makes this poignantly clear in the song of the Chorus Leader where we read that he would never welcome the War-God into his house, nor will he ever allow him to recline by his side and sing the democratic song of Harmodios (978-87).

It is as a result of *Polemos*' inherently destructive nature that Dikaiopolis turns away Lamachus, Dercetes of Phyle, and the Athenian Bridegroom. All were advocates of the War-God and therefore all prevented the re-entry of Dionysus into the civic life of Athens. Hence Forrest's argument that "we may pass over the point that Dikaiopolis refuses to share his peace with anyone else" as an "extra comic twist; rather than the essential point of the whole comedy"⁴³⁷ is misleading to say the least. Indeed, Dikaiopolis' refusal to share his peace with the war party is one of the essential points of this *trugōdia*.

⁴³⁶ For a list of all the comic poets and their targets that included many war advocates, moderates and radicals alike (i.e., Pericles, Cleon, Hyperbolus, etc) see Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, 420-5.

⁴³⁷ Forrest, "Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," 4-5.

The Chorus does not chastise Dikaiopolis for his refusal to sell Lamachus some eels and birds for the Festival of the Pitchers. Rather, they call him *phronimon* and *ypersophon* (971-2). In regards to the word “*phronimon*” it should be noted that there is no agreed-upon working definition. Sommerstein translates it as “man of wisdom” while Henderson translates the same word as “smart”. On the other hand, Aristotle describes *phronimon* as a quality found in a leader.⁴³⁸ In agreement with Aristotle I would claim, that by referring to Dikaiopolis as *phronimon* and *ypersophon* (hyper-wise) the Chorus is assigning to Dikaiopolis a form of political wisdom.

Part of Dikaiopolis’ political wisdom entails the principle of *jus in bello*. This principle, distinguishes between active combatants and innocent civilians in a war. Women, insofar as they are innocent civilians, should not suffer according to this theory. Dikaiopolis, insofar as he gives some peace to the young Bride, an innocent civilian, demonstrates that he recognizes and adheres to this principle. This is not to say that Dikaiopolis affirms the distinction between active combatants and innocent civilians to the exclusion of all other principles found in *jus in bello*.

Another aspect of Dikaiopolis’ political wisdom involves the case of the young Bride. When the Bridegroom requested a spoonful of peace so he could stay home and screw (1052) Dikaiopolis refuses despite being offered meat in return. More than that, Dikaiopolis goes as far as to assert that he would not give him a drop for a thousand

⁴³⁸ “We claim that the excellent ruler is good and *phronimon*, while the [excellent] citizen is not necessarily *phronimon*” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1277a).

drachmas (1055), an extravagant amount. Yet, Dikaiopolis does not hesitate to give some peace treaty to the young Bride for free. Dikaiopolis pours some *spondas* (i.e., treaty/wine libation) for the Bride and provides her with some magic-like instructions on how to keep her husband's penis behind while her husband departs for war (1065-6).

Plato, who read Aristophanes carefully, puts in the mouth of Aristophanes the so-called myth of the original humans in the *Symposium*. Here we are told that proto-humans were once joined in pairs of two but were sliced in half by Zeus as punishment for their ambitious plans to reach the heavens and attack the gods (190a-c). Plato's Aristophanes finishes this myth with a warning: further disrespect towards the gods carries the risk of further mutilations. The warning that the Platonic Aristophanes voices in the *Symposium* sounds eerily similar to Dikaiopolis' mutilation of the warrior's body. Insofar as the Bridegroom is part of the Athenian military machine, his "comic" mutilation, I would argue, is a warning towards the hubristic, imperial Athenian empire. The Athenian state, similar to Plato's proto-humans, was seeking to rise above all other states and become god-like in her political dominance. Athens did achieve that status as leader of the Delian League and, after she "destroyed the independence of her allies and severely punished the rebellions of those subjected to her," she became cruel and savage.⁴³⁹ Insofar as the Bridegroom personifies the body of the military Athenian machine, his mutilation must be seen as punishment – even if only a comic one.

⁴³⁹ Nietzsche, *Homer's Contest*, §38.

The claim by the Chorus in the *strophe* that Dikaiopolis is a *phronimon* and *hypersophon* man (970) is closely related to the *antistrophe*, which praises a personified Reconciliation (*Diallage*) and likens her to the goddess of Eros, Aphrodite (988-9). Related to the Chorus' *strophe* and *antistrophe*, is the first song by the Chorus Leader denouncing the War-God (978-87) and the second song addressed to the personified Reconciliation expressing his desire towards her (990-99). Taken together, the Chorus argues that a *phronimon* and hyperwise political leader should aim for Reconciliation, with the Chorus Leader affirming that position by rejecting the War-God and by embracing Reconciliation. Subsequently, this represents an *anagnorisis* (recognition) by the Chorus Leader that Reconciliation is to be preferred to *Polemos* (War-God). In other words, this marks the complete and utter persuasion of the Acharnian Chorus by Dikaiopolis. The Acharnian Chorus forgets the war party and embraces the peace party in the form of the beautiful goddess Reconciliation.

When the Chorus Leader addresses Reconciliation he sings to her: *ōs kalon exousa to prosōpon ar' elanthanes* (990). Sommerstein translates this as: "How fair a face you had, Reconciliation, and I never knew it!", and Henderson as: "I didn't realize what a lovely face you have". Both translations render the meaning of *elanthanes* as "I never knew it!" and "I didn't realize" respectively. To the above, I would add an additional interpretation of *elanthanes*; that of "forgetfulness."⁴⁴⁰ Rendering *elanthanes* as forgetfulness, I would argue, is more appropriate in relation to the Festival of the Pitchers. To explain, its not that the Acharnian Chorus never knew, or never realized how beautiful

⁴⁴⁰ Heidegger also treats *elanthane* as forgetfulness (see Ralph P. Hummel "A Once and Future Politics: Heidegger's Recovery of the Political in Parmenides", *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 26/3 (2004): 279-303).

one of their most ancient, equalitarian festivals was, but rather after six years of war they had *forgotten* the beauty associated with the harvest of their wine and the communal benefits of that harvest. To a large degree, the staging of the Festival of the Pitchers in the Acharnians is a rhetorical act of remembrance. Its depiction reminds the Acharnian Chorus of all the joyous activities that the war deprived from them.

By demonstrating that peace will lead to the resumption of the Festival of the Pitchers, Dikaiopolis predisposes the Acharnian Chorus to Reconciliation. The same men who were shouting that they were going to continue their fighting until the enemy was defeated (229-33), are now the same who gaze at Reconciliation and exclaim how they had forgotten the beauty of her face. Whereas, in the first part of the play, they complain that their joints are arthritic and their bodies are failing them (219), in the second part they proclaim that they can “strike home three times” with Reconciliation (994). The old men become rejuvenated and feel the erotic strength of young men. The anger-filled Acharnian elders are now transformed into poetic, talkative lovers. Whereas these men entered the theatre stage as followers of the War-God, now they exit as followers of Dionysus and lovers of Reconciliation.

5.4 The Pleasures of Peace Versus the Pains of War: Lines 1069-123

One would have expected that after the Acharnian Chorus is won over by Dikaiopolis the play would end. However, this is not the case. Next, Dikaiopolis turns his attention to Lamachus, The Great-Battler, for a final attack. Subsequently this is one of the longest agons, not only in the *Acharnians*, but in the entire Aristophanic corpus.

Chorus Leader: But look, a man speeds towards us with furrowed brows, as if he has some dire news to report.

[Enter first Messenger]

First Messenger: Ah, hardships and battles (*machai*) and Lamachus (*Lamachoi*)!

[Lamachus emerging from his door]

Lamachus: Who makes a racket round my bronze-bossed halls?⁴⁴¹

First Messenger: The generals order you this very day, with your crests (*lohous*) and your ambuscades (*lophous*), to march out in the snow on the double, to guard the passes (1075). They've received a report that Boetian bandits will make a raid around the time of the Pitcher and Pot Feasts.

[First Messenger exits]

Lamachus: Oh generals more numerous than capable! Isn't it terrible that I'm not allowed to join the feasting?

Dikaiopolis: Hooray for the polamical (*polemolamachaicon*) expedition (1080).

Lamachus: Alas and damn the luck (*oimoi kakodaimōn*), are you now mocking me (*katagelas*)?

Dikaiopolis: [Picking up a locust from the table] Would you like to fight, you four-feathered Geryon?

Lamachus: Alas (*aiai*), what an order the messenger messaged me!

[Enter Second Messenger]

Second Messenger: Dikaiopolis!

Dikaiopolis: What is it?

Second Messenger: Go along to dinner right away (1085), and take your hamper and your pitcher; the Priest of Dionysus invites you! But hurry; you've held up dinner a long time. Everything else stands ready; couches, tables, pillows, coverlets, garlands, perfume, tasty tidbits (1090); the whores are there; cakes, pastries, sesame crackers, rolls, dancing girls. Harmodius' "beloved", pretty ones! But hurry up, as fast as you can!

[Second Messenger exits]

Lamachus: I'm under a bad sign (*kakodaimōn egō*)!

⁴⁴¹ Recall Euripides similar exclamation when Dikaiopolis calls on him.

Dikaiopolis: It serves you right, for signing up with a big Gorgon! [*To a slave*] (1095)
 Close up, and someone pack my dinner!

Lamachus: Boy, boy, bring my mess kit out here to me.

Dikaiopolis: Boy, boy bring my picnic basket out here to me.

Lamachus: Get the seasoned salt, boy and the onions.

Dikaiopolis: For me the fish fillets; I'm sick of onions. (1100)

Lamachus: Bring me a fig leaf, boy, full of stale salt fish.

Dikaiopolis: And you can bring me a stuffed fig leaf; I'll cook it when I get there.

Lamachus: Bring here the twin plumes from my helmet.

Dikaiopolis: Bring me the pigeons and the thrushes.

Lamachus: So fair and white the ostrich plume (1105)

Dikaiopolis: So fair and brown the pigeon meat!

Lamachus: *Anthrōpe*, please stop laughing (*katagelōn*) at my armour.⁴⁴²

Dikaiopolis: *Anthrōpe*, please stop looking at my thrushes.

Lamachus: *Anthrōpe*, please stop addressing me. (1113)

Dikaiopolis: I'm not; my boy and I have been having an argument for a while now. [*To his slave.*] Do you want to bet, and have Lamachus decide it, whether locusts are tastier, or thrushes? (1116)

Lamachus: Oh! What imprudence!

Dikaiopolis: He's strongly for the locusts. (1117)

Lamachus: Bring out the crest case with the triple crests.

Dikaiopolis: And give me a casserole with the hare's meat.

Lamachus: What, have moths consumed my crests?

Dikaiopolis: What, am I to eat the hare stew before dinner?

Lamachus: Boy, boy, take down my spear and bring it out here.

Dikaiopolis: Boy, boy, you take the sausage off and bring it here.

Lamachus: Come, let me draw the case of my spear. Ready, hold on, boy. [*The slave holds the spear as Lamachus removes the cover*] (1120)

Dikaiopolis: And you, boy, hold on to this. [*The slave holds the skewer while Dikaiopolis removes the sausage*]

Lamachus: Bring me the staves, boy, to support my shield.

Dikaiopolis: Bring out the baguettes to support mine [*Indicating and rubbing his belly at the same time*]

Lamachus: Bring hither my buckler round and Gorgon-bossed.

Dikaiopolis: And give me a flat-cake, round and backed with cheese (1125)

Lamachus: Isn't this what men call flat insolence (*katagelōs*)?

Dikaiopolis: Isn't this what men call a delicious flat-cake?

Lamachus: Boy, you pour on the oil. [*Buffing his shield*] In this bronze I see the reflection of an old man about to be prosecuted for cowardice (*deilias*)⁴⁴³

Dikaiopolis: [*Speaking to his slave*] And you pour the honey. [*Gazing into the flat-cake*] (1130) Here too an old man is visible, telling Lamachus, son of Gorgasus, to go to hell!

Lamachus: Hand hither, boy, my warlike corslet.

⁴⁴² Sommerstein: "Sir"; Henderson: "Mister".

⁴⁴³ Referring to Dikaiopolis.

Dikaiopolis: Boy, fetch me forth a corslet too – my pitcher.

Lamachus: In this I bolster me to meet the foe.

Dikaiopolis: In this I bolster me to meet my fellow drinkers. (1135)

Lamachus: Boy, bind my bedding to the shield.

Dikaiopolis: Boy, bind my dinner to the picnic basket.⁴⁴⁴

Lamachus: And I shall carry the mess kit by myself.

Dikaiopolis: And I'll grab by cloak and be leaving.

Lamachus: Enclasp and raise the shield, boy, and be off. It's snowing! Brrr, I've wintry business! [*Lamachus exits in one direction*] (1140)

Dikaiopolis: Pick up the dinner, I've festive business! [*Dikaiopolis exits on the opposite direction*]

Chorus Leader: Good luck on your expeditions!

How dissimilar the paths you travel:

he'll wear a garland and drink; (1145)

you'll stand watch and freeze.

He'll be sleeping

with a very fresh young girl,

getting his thingum squeezed.

Chorus: Antimachus son of Drizzler,⁴⁴⁵ the drafter of bills, (*strophe*)
the composer of bad songs: (1151)

to put it bluntly,

may Zeus terribly eradicate him!

He's the one who, as producer at the Lenaea,
unkindly dismissed me without dinner. (1155)⁴⁴⁶

May I yet see him hungry for squid,

and may it lie grilled and sizzling by the shore

and make port safely at this table;

and then, when he's about

to grab it, may a dog snap it up (1160)

and run away with it!

That's one curse (*kakōn*) for him; and here's another, (*antistrophe*)

⁴⁴⁴ In this entire passage Aristophanes is using, what in literary analysis is called “*anaphora*”, namely, the deliberate repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning of several successive verses for rhetorical purposes.

⁴⁴⁵ Otherwise unknown figure. The scholia claim that the “son of Drizzler” refers to Antimachus’ habit of spraying saliva when he talked’ (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 205, n. 34).

⁴⁴⁶ The producers or *Chorēgoi* were expected to hold a banquet for the troupe after their performance, something which this producer obviously did not, therefore the angry accusation, followed by the classic generic-type curse of, “I suffered hunger because of you, and may you suffer hunger as well” (Sommerstein, *Acharnians*, 211, n. 1154-5; Henderson, *Acharnians/ Knights* 207, n. 135).

to happen to him in the night.
 As he walks to home shivering
 after galloping his horse (1165)
 I hope some drunkard –
 mad Orestes!⁴⁴⁷ – knocks him on the head;
 and when he wants to grab a stone
 I hope in the darkness
 he grabs in his hand a fresh-shat turd (1170),
 and holding that glittering missile
 let him charge at his foe, then miss him
 and hit Cratinus!

[*A Third Messenger rushes in and bangs on Lamachus' door*]

Third Messenger: Ye vassals of the house of Lamachus, water, hear water in a basin (1175), prepare linen strips, wax salve, oily wool, a bandage for his ankle! The man's been wounded by a stake, from jumping over a trench, and twisted his ankle backwards and dislocated it, and fractured his head by falling on a stone (1180), and waked the sleeping Gorgon from his shield! And <when he saw> the great plume had fallen <from his helmet> against the rocks, he voiced a direful cry. "O brilliant visage, now for the last time do I behold you, light of mine; I am no more!" This he said when he fell into a drainage ditch; then he stood up and faced his fleeing men, as he pressed and routed the brigands with his spear. [*Enter Lamachus, wounded and bedraggled, supported by two Soldiers.*] And here he is himself! Come, open the door!

Lamachus: Ah me! Ah me! (*attataī attataī*) (1190)
 Hateful as hell these icy pains; wretched am I!
 I am undone, by foeman's spear struck down.
 But it would be true agony (1195)

⁴⁴⁷ The nickname of a contemporary historical figure after Orestes, the mythical figure who wandered insane in Athens after killing his own mother (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 209, n. 137). According to legend Orestes visited Athens during the Anthesteria festival, however, since he was viewed as "polluted", the Athenians closed the entrances to all their shrines and obliged him to eat alone and drink from his own pitcher during the festival. Consequently, the closing of all temples and having each participant provide his own pitcher for the Choes Festival became entrenched in tradition. In other words the figure of Orestes became linked to this festival, which might help to explain the mention of his name here, although it is unclear for what purpose. The only exception to the above rule was the sanctuary of Dionysus Limnaeus (Dionysus of the Lakes or Marches) that remained open. As a matter of fact this sanctuary opened its doors *only* during this festival. The inhabitants of Attike visited Dionysus' sanctuary with their wine pitchers in order for Dionysus to purify and bless their "newly opened wine" (Dietrich, "A Rite of Swinging during the Anthesteria," 43-5).

If Dikaiopolis should seem me wounded
 And jeer at my misfortunes.
 [*Dikaiopolis enters the stage, supported by two dancing girls*]
Dikaiopolis: Ah me! Ah me! (*attataī attataī*)
 What tits! How firm, like quinces!
 Kiss me softly, my two bangles, (1200)
 one with an open mouth, one with plunging tongue.
 Because I'm the first to drain my pitcher!
Lamachus: O lamentable conjunction of my woes!
 Ah, ah, my afflictive wounds! (1205)
Dikaiopolis: Hey, hey! Hello there, little Lamachippus!
Lamachus: Accursed am I!
Dikaiopolis: [*Speaking to one girl*] Smooching me, eh?
Lamachus: Beleaguered am I!
Dikaiopolis: [*Speaking to the other girl*] Nibbling me, eh?
Lamachus: Woe is me, what a costly fray! (1210)
Dikaiopolis: What, somebody made you defray their expenses at the Pitcher Feast?
Lamachus: Ah, ah, Healer, Healer (*Paian Paian*)
Dikaiopolis: But it's not the Healer's Festival today.
Lamachus: Hold, o hold this leg of mine! Ouch!
 Take hold my friends! (*ō philoi*) (1215)
Dikaiopolis: And you two hold the thick of my cock;
 take hold, my girls (*ō philai*)!
Lamachus: I reel, my pate smitten by a stone,
 and swoon in darkness (*skotodiniō*).
Dikaiopolis: I too want to go to bed; I have a hard-on (1220),
 and want to fuck in darkness (*skotobiniō*).
Lamachus: Bear me off to Pittalus' clinic,
 with healing hands.
Dikaiopolis: Take me to the judges. Where's the King?
 Give me the wine skin! (1225)
Lamachus: A lance has pierced me through,
 Most woefully, to the bone!
 [*Lamachus is borne away*]
Dikaiopolis: [*Holding up his wine pitcher*] Look, this pitcher is empty!
 Hail the Champion (*kallinikos*)!
Chorus Leader: Hail then – since you bid me,
 old sir – the Champion!
Dikaiopolis: And what's more, I poured the wine neat
 and chugged it straight down!
Chorus Leader: Then Hail, old chap!
 Take the wineskin and go (1230).
Dikaiopolis: The follow me, singing,
 "Hail the Champion!"
Chorus: Yes, we'll follow, in your honor,
 singing "Hail the Champion"
 for you and your wineskin (1235).

[*Dikaiopolis leads the Chorus off the stage in song*]

As Dikaiopolis leads the Chorus off the stage the play comes to an end. With the ending comes the realization that Dikaiopolis and the Acharnian Chorus (especially following their conversion) speak the greatest amount of lines. Lamachus, the Persian Ambassador and Theoros, on the other hand, utter the fewest. In other words the war advocates are portrayed as men of few words, while Dikaiopolis as a man of many words.

Joe Park Poe, commenting on the same passage, writes that “when the slaves of Lamachus and Dikaiopolis...run in and out with supplies for fighting and festivity, the effectiveness of the clowning is in no way reduced by the pacifist message.”⁴⁴⁸ True enough. However, turning the same interpretation around, we could argue that “the effectiveness of the pacifist message is in no way reduced by the clowning, thus putting the emphasis on pacifism rather than clownism. After all, we should not forget that Aristophanic fools, like medieval court jesters, played the fool so that they could speak inconvenient truths, and not the other way around.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ Poe, “Multiplicity, Discontinuity and Visual Meaning in Aristophanic Comedy,” 32.

⁴⁴⁹ This is illustrated superbly in the musings of Grimmelshausen’s court-foul, Simplicissimus when we hear him explain: “I had resolved to censure all folly and chastise all vanity, an occupation for which my station at that time was most excellently suited. No table companion was too good for me to pluck out and upbraid his depravity, and if any of them were unwilling to put up with this, they were in addition either made a laughing-stock by the others or admonished by my master that no wise man be given to quarrelling with a fool” (Grimmelshausen as quoted in Glasgow, *Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy*, 206).

Phallic symbolism, peace and talkativeness are explored at length in Martha Nussbaum's essay, "The Comic Soul: Or, This Phallus That Is Not One."⁴⁵⁰ In this essay Nussbaum begins by challenging Erich Segal's thesis that the image of the erect, large phallus is a symbol of masculinity and aggression. Nussbaum argues that the image of the erect phallus as a sign of "masculine competitive triumph" is essentially an "American locker-room" view.⁴⁵¹ In ancient Greece, Nussbaum argues, the opposite was true. In vase paintings and other works of art, warriors were depicted as having broad shoulders, bulging thighs and small penises. A small penis, the arguments goes, symbolized "self-control and mastery"; the opposite was said to be true of the large erect penis. Those that sported large, erect penises were the Silenoi (half-man, half-horse) and the Satyrs, two mythical creatures that were notorious for abandoning themselves to their passions. The same author draws a link between the status of the penis and the amount of talkativeness. Namely, Nussbaum argues that the warrior-type with his small penis does not talk much, or as she puts it, the "tongue is as tiny" as the penis. By contrast, the man with the large penis also has a "large tongue", that is to say, he loves to talk.

In terms of conflict resolution it is easy to see where Nussbaum is going with her theory. The military-type has a small tongue because it "prefers to solve things by bashing," whereas the non-military type has a large tongue because he prefers to solve things by talking and deliberating. If we take the Spartan society as anecdotal evidence, Nussbaum's hypothesis is not far-fetched. The Spartans, the warriors *par excellence* of the ancient world, were famous for the brevity of their speech (hence the term "laconic").

⁴⁵⁰ This essay belongs to a collection of essays written in honour of the late classical scholar, Charles Segal.

⁴⁵¹ Nussbaum, "The Comic Soul," 165.

While we do not know much about their penises, we do know that they prized the control of their emotions.⁴⁵²

Based on the above, one could say that poets, playwrights and philosophers have “large tongues” and so are lovers of reconciliation, lovers of peace, and ultimately Dionysian disciples. Of course one could object to the above by arguing that war-hawk orators also have “large tongues.”⁴⁵³ I would respond by highlighting another one of Nussbaum’s articles where the relationship between talk with reconciliation is explored. Concurring with Charles Segal’s essay, “The Character of Dionysus and the Unity of the *Frogs*,” Nussbaum argues that the talk that comedy loves is “Dionysian talk, the poetic talk of the tragic and comic festivals,” and Aristophanes “connects this sort of talk with tradition, with civic harmony, and with reconciliation.”

Keeping Nussbaum’s argument in mind, we turn our attention to Charles Blattberg and his argument that “conversation-produced reconciliation” is central to conflict resolution. According to this author one should not only aim at the accommodation of political conflict, but rather its overcoming by understanding that can only be achieved by reconciliation brought about by conversation. Or, to put it in his words:

The aim...should never only be to *accommodate* a political conflict, to encourage the differing parties to tolerate each other and so negotiate, for it may be possible to *overcome* such a conflict with greater understanding through a conversation-produced reconciliation, thus

⁴⁵² For example, when a helot insulted the Spartan king, Charilaos, he is said to have replied: “By Castor and Polydeuces, if I were not angry, I would kill you” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 189).

⁴⁵³ I would like to thank Terence Marshall (Universite Paris X – Nanterre) for pointing this out to me.

bringing the whole of a society's parts closer together by strengthening the purposes that all its citizens may be said to share.⁴⁵⁴

Granted that in writing the above Blattberg had in mind intercultural reconciliation within the framework of contemporary politics, nonetheless, the above argument compliments Nussbaum's argument. A central point of Nussbaum's thesis is that the justice of the "tragic soul" lies in persuasion and deliberation. Dikaiopolis' victory over the Great-Battler is ultimately that of "good deliberation" (*euboulia*). By contrast, the "trouble with the political-military leadership," the same author continues, is its lack of interest "in asking what is really in the interests of the common welfare, and deliberating about the war with that end in view."⁴⁵⁵

If anything, the problem with the politics of war is that war leaders are rarely interested in engaging in anything other than superficial conversations of intimidation. Aristophanes conveys this sort of intimidation in Lamachus' daunting comment to Dikaiopolis that in his shields' reflection he can see "an old man about to be prosecuted for cowardice" (1128-29). This is a classic example of the exploitation of fear to silence anti-war opponents. The Just-Polis dismisses the Great-Battler's threat in classic iambic poetry: "Here too an old man is visible, telling Lamachus, son of Gorgasus, to go to hell."

⁴⁵⁴ Blattberg, *From Pluralist to Patriotic Politics*, 120. The same author on chapter four, "Towards the Patriotic Policy," identifies his approach with that of comedy. In the course of advocating for a change in our attitudes towards politics he writes: "to make room for laughter in and about the political realm is one not insignificant way of putting a needed crack in the seal of its increasingly hermetic prison of pessimism" (118).

⁴⁵⁵ Nussbaum, "The Comic Soul," 173.

Dikaiopolis' defiant reply, we should keep in mind, is only possible because it takes place within the safe confines of the theatre.

The fact that Aristophanes managed to avoid impeachment for his *Babylonians* was not so much a testament to his oratorical abilities (although that as well) as it was a testament to the strength of democratic institutions such as the *Boulē* (Council). By inference, the “health” of political comedy is a reliable indicator of the “health” of a democracy. For example, we should not forget that the political comedies of Old Comedy came to a sudden end when the conquering Spartans installed an oligarchy in Athens. Hence, political comedy serves as the canary in the mine shaft of democracy; the silencing of its songs is a warning that un-democratic winds are blowing in the direction of the state. War is a particularly strong un-democratic wind, and according to Alexis de Tocqueville, “All those who seek to destroy the liberties of a democratic nation ought to know that war is the surest and shortest means to accomplish it.”⁴⁵⁶

Invariably, a healthy democracy is one where lots of conversation takes place. If one were to compare democracy to a body, one could say that the healthy democratic body possesses a “large tongue.” The democratic body is a Dionysian body. But surely, the discerning reader will argue, Athens was a democratic body that nevertheless used force numerous times against her so-called “allies”. True enough, but this seems to have been precisely one of the implied criticisms of Aristophanes' *Babylonians*, namely, that

⁴⁵⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 592.

Athens governed herself using democratic principles, but in her dealings with her allies she governed using tyrannical principles.

The *Babylonians*, and Aristophanes' anti-war trilogy, namely, the *Acharnians*, *Lysistrata* and *Peace*, were intended for that portion of the population that was capable of laughter. According to Nussbaum, persons who are capable of laughing at Aristophanes' comedies have "one part that is soft, ready for surprises, just a little bit ready to own up to its own porousness."⁴⁵⁷ By contrast those incapable of laughter are agelasts with rigid personalities, persons the likes of Cleon and (the fictional) Lamachus. According to the same author, one of the most alarming aspects of the contemporary world situation is the fact that, hard as one may try, one is unlikely to find a single leading member of the Bush administration capable of laughing at the comedies of Aristophanes.⁴⁵⁸

One of the reasons for this, I would argue, is because such persons are under the impression that they possess all the answers. Naturally, they do not listen because they do not ask, and they do not ask because they are not searching, and they are not searching because they are under the impression that they already know all the answers. Such types are not philosophers, and even if they were, they cease to be philosophers the moment at

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, 177.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

which the subjective certainty of their solution becomes stronger than the awareness of the problematic character of the same solution.⁴⁵⁹

From the perspective of Aristophanic comedy, a “conversation-produced reconciliation” cannot take place with such agelasts. Judging from the fact that we do not observe any persuasive efforts towards such figures in the *Acharnians*, is evidence that Aristophanes was aware of this fact. Instead of persuasion and/or conversation, Aristophanes’ approach towards Miles *Gloriosus* figures is that of hostile, iambic jokes. At best these jokes aim at ego-deflation and at worse they aim at ridicule and political embarrassment.⁴⁶⁰ Instead Aristophanes aims his efforts at persons who still possess a “soft part,” as Nussbaum puts it. In this spirit, Aristophanes, via the element of dramatical *epideixis*, demonstrates that war is a threat to traditional family values, communal solidarity, and agricultural sustainability.

At this point I would like to focus on the question, “What role, if any, reconciliation has in a play of Old Comedy, as distinct from New Comedy?”⁴⁶¹ In

⁴⁵⁹ Here I am paraphrasing a passage found in Strauss’ *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, which in its entirety reads: “...yet as long as there is no wisdom but only quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems. Therefore the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at which the ‘subjective certainty’ of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of that solution” (Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 1).

⁴⁶⁰ This sort of Aristophanic political satire is best observed in Bill Maher’s HBO show, *Real Time with Bill Maher*.

⁴⁶¹ I would like to thank Charles Blattberg for raising this question.

addressing this question I begin by turning our attention to Northrop Frye and his *Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye draws a thematic distinction between Aristophanic comedy (i.e., Old Comedy) and Menandic comedy (i.e., New Comedy). Aristophanic comedy, according to Frye, was of the high mimetic mode while New Comedy was of the low mimetic mode. The high mimetic mode is said to have contained a strong central protagonist who constructs and defends his own society against unwanted elements by force and ends with the protagonist receiving honour and riches. New Comedy, on the other hand, involves a hero and a heroine who are kept apart by a conflict or confusion. This confusion is resolved in what Aristotle terms an *anagnorisis* or “recognition”. What follows is the social elevation of the protagonist, reconciliation between all the parties, and a celebratory marriage. The *Acharnians* fits Frye’s model of high mimetic mode since Dikaiopolis constructs his own society (i.e., private agora), which he then defends against sycophants by the use of force (i.e., leather straps). The same is true of the ending depicting Dikaiopolis being hailed as a champion and receiving many riches in the form of culinary delights and erotic pleasures.

The element of young love, which is central to New Comedy, is not absent in the *Acharnians*. Young love is depicted here in the form of the Groom and Bride. However, their roles are secondary at best. Moreover, the “love” of the young couple in the *Acharnians* is far different than the love of young lovers in Meander’s comedies. In New Comedy the hero and heroine experience “romantic love”. In the *Acharnians* the young couple is experiencing erotic lust (for a lack of a better word). The Groom wants to stay home so he can screw (*kinoiē menōn*) while the Bride only wants her husband’s penis to remain home (1061). This brings to mind two thoughts. The first thought is that love in New Comedy is situated in the higher regions of the body; close to the heart. By contrast

in Old Comedy “love” is situated in the lower regions of the body; below the navel. The second thought, related to the first, is that the evolution from Old to New Comedy is perhaps similar to the evolution of pagan eros to the Christian *agapē*. The transformation of tyrannical eros⁴⁶² to the less passionate *agapē*; the conversion of Saul of the Tribe of Benjamin to Saint Paul.⁴⁶³

The element of reconciliation is present in both Old and New Comedy and is expressed in the form of a festival that takes the shape of a feast, dance or marriage.⁴⁶⁴ In New Comedy reconciliation usually occurs in the form of a marriage. In Old Comedy this could also be the case (as seen in *The Birds*) but in the *Acharnians* reconciliation is expressed in the form of a feast. Reconciliation takes place between the Acharnian Chorus and the Personified Reconciliation, that is, between the Acharnian Chorus and peace. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, in contrast to New Comedy, the reconciliation in the *Acharnians* is not all-inclusive. For example, no reconciliation takes place with Lamachus, the Groom, the Sycophants or Dercetes of Phyle. All of the above were, in varying degrees, enabling the war to continue. All of the above are either excluded, or, in the case of the sycophants, expelled from Dikaiopolis’ “new world”. Hence, we could say that reconciliation in the *Acharnians* is more exclusive than the reconciliation that one observes in New Comedy.

⁴⁶² Consider old Sophocles amusing response to the question whether or not he was still capable of making love: “Quiet, man. I am very glad to have escaped from all that, like a slave who has escaped from a savage and tyrannical master” (*Republic* 329c-d).

⁴⁶³ Notice Saint Paul’s description of *agapē* which is outlined as the exact opposite of eros (1 Corinthians 13:4)

⁴⁶⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 76.

In addition, the reconciliation that we observe in the *Acharnians* between the Chorus and the personified Reconciliation (i.e., peace talks) does not involve the protagonist, Dikaiopolis *per se*. His role resembles that of a lobbyist and/or reconciliatory figure who sets out to “correct” a mistaken impression. In the *Acharnians* the mistaken impression is the belief that Athens was wronged and that a negotiated peace would have been detrimental to Athenian interests. To be sure, confusion and/or mistaken belief(s) are the hallmark of New Comedy. Yet in the *Acharnians* the majority of Dikaiopolis’ efforts are aimed at “correcting” the Acharnian Chorus’ mistaken beliefs about war, peace and their interests. This, I would argue, suggests that the shift from ignorance to knowledge is not unique to New Comedy but it can be found (in embryonic form) at the *Acharnians* as well. However, I would add that, in the *Acharnians* this shift is inherently political and public whereas in New Comedy the same shift is inherently non-political and private.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION: A RECAPULATION

Let him who desires peace prepare for war.

Flavius Vegetius Renatus⁴⁶⁵

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

Mahatma Gandhi

If we take Cratinus to be the father of political comedy we cannot simply say that the *Acharnians* is a political comedy. According to Aristophanes, the *Acharnians* is a political *trugōdia*; a new type of drama that is neither tragedy nor comedy. With the exception of Taplin and Nussbaum, the significance of this point has been overlooked in the literature. Aristophanic *trugōdia*, like comedy, delves into the political arena but not with the simple function of exposure and slander (although this as well). Dikaiopolis' utterance that even *trugōdia* knows the *dikaion* (just/justice) is a signal to the audience that the aim of *trugōdia* is to delve into the civic sphere with the intention of engaging matters that, up to that point, were beyond the intellectual and philosophical jurisdiction of comedy. Dikaiopolis' apologetic utterance in which he asks the audience not to be aggrieved with him for daring to speak about the polis while making *trugōdia* (497-9), serves as a reminder that this was a bold innovation on Aristophanes' part.

To a large extent, the same utterance also serves as evidences of Aristophanes' own anxiety when it comes to discussing serious things in a funny manner. Aristophanes,

⁴⁶⁵ *De Rei Militari* as quoted in Digital Attic

<http://www.pvv.ntnu.no/~madsb/home/war/vegetius/>

if we are to trust Plato's *Symposium*, never managed to overcome this anxiety, namely, that of not being taken seriously by his fellow Athenians but especially the intellectuals.

At the risk of deviation, Plato was an acute reader of Aristophanes and a tremendous amount of intertextuality exists in the Platonic corpus that lies undiscovered and unappreciated. This, despite Leo Strauss' insightful remark that the *Symposium*, is Plato's response to Aristophanes.⁴⁶⁶ Or, Nietzsche's aphorism which reads: "Nothing...has caused me to meditate more on *Plato's* secrecy and sphinx nature than the happily preserved *petit fait* that under the pillow of his deathbed there was found no "Bible," nor anything Egyptian, Pythagorean, or Platonic – but a volume of Aristophanes."⁴⁶⁷ Needless to say, this topic could be a very fruitful area for future research.

Back to our subject, Aristophanes' anxiety seems to have stemmed from his fellow-citizens' reluctance to accept humour into the arena of conflict resolution. This snobbishness is articulated in ironic form in *Lysistrata*. Although *Lysi-strata* (Dis-Bander of Armies) challenges the Magistrate from the perspective of gender politics, nonetheless, if one substitutes the word "comedy" for "women" one ends up with an eloquent and forcible assertion by Aristophanes demanding that comedy be acknowledged and heard.

Lysistrata:...Before now, and for quite some time, we maintained our decorum and suffered <in silence> whatever you men did, because you wouldn't let us make a sound. But you weren't exactly all we could ask for. No, we knew only too well what you were up to, and many a time we'd hear in our homes about a bad decision you'd made on some great issue of state. Then, masking the pain in our hearts, we'd put on a smile and ask you, "How did the Assembly go today? Any decision about a rider to the peace treaty? And my husband would say, "What's that to you? Shut up!" And I'd shut up.

⁴⁶⁶ Strauss, *Leo Strauss on Plato's Symposium*, edited and with a foreword by Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)

⁴⁶⁷ *Beyond Good and Evil* §28.

First Old Woman: I wouldn't have shut up!

Magistrate: If you hadn't shut up you'd have got a beating!

Lysistrata: Well, that's why I did shut up – then. But later on we began to hear about even worse decisions you'd made, and then we would ask, "Husband, how come you're handling this so stupidly? And right away he'd glare at me and tell me to get back to my sewing if I didn't want major damage to my head: "War shall be the business of menfolk," unquote.⁴⁶⁸

Magistrate: He was right on the mark, I say.

Lysistrata: How could he be right, you sorry fool (*kakodaimon*), when we were forbidden to offer advice even when your policy was wrong? But then, when we began to hear you in the streets openly crying, "There isn't a man left in the land", and someone else saying", "God knows, there isn't, not a one", after that we women decided to lose no more time, and to band together to save Greece. What was the point of waiting any longer? So, if you're ready to listen in your turn as we give you good advice (*hrista legousōn*), and to shut up as we had to, we can put you back on the right track (507-28).

In the above, not only does Aristophanes disparage epic poetry in the figure of Homer, the unofficial political legislator of the Greek world, but he also asserts the right of comedy to offer advice to the state. If it is to be of any consolation, the role of humour as a valid form of communication in political discourse is still being challenged today.⁴⁶⁹

It should be said that, in writing the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes was engaging in the creation of a literary work, which was also a competition against other comic poets, tragic playwrights and political orators. In that contest Aristophanes was competing not only for a prize on artistic grounds, but for the distinction of playing a role in the civic education

⁴⁶⁸ Lysistrata is quoting Homer's *Iliad* 6.492.

⁴⁶⁹ For example consider Blattberg's argument that under Habermas' model of deliberative democracy humour would be by necessity excluded as a result of its wordplay ("Patriotic, Not Deliberative, Democracy", 2003).

of the democratic polis. In the *Acharnians* Aristophanes argues that comedy, similar to tragedy, is capable of offering the state critical advice in political matters.

Part of what Aristophanes' *trugōdia* offered to its ancient audience, and what it could still offer to us today, includes among other things the following: i) the advocacy of a self-sustaining society (i.e., opening scene); ii) the discouragement of overconfidence (i.e., the Persian embassy); iii) relying on external actors for defence purposes (i.e., the Thracian mercenaries); iv) ability to engage in self-criticism (i.e., parabasis); v) avoidance of hubris in international affairs (i.e., Megarian Decree); vi) ability to engage in alternative image-nations when confronted with conflict situations (i.e., Dikaiopolis' private peace treaty); vii) the rejection of warmongers (i.e., Theoros); viii) de-glorification of the war culture (i.e., Dikaiopolis' parody of military symbols); iv) willingness to engage in reconciliatory policies towards former enemies (i.e., Dikaiopolis' lifting of the economic embargo); x) empathetic disposition to the suffering of others (i.e., starving of Megarian girls); xi) rejecting the politics of anger (i.e., the expulsion of sycophants from Athens); xii) awareness of the horrors of war (i.e., Lamachus' cries); and xiii) the advocacy of reconciliatory conversation (i.e., Dikaiopolis' entire conduct during the play).

In the course of this dissertation I have argued that Aristophanes meant for the *Acharnians* to have a real impact in the political arena.⁴⁷⁰ The fact that the historical Athenians did not sign a peace treaty with the Spartans, however, should not be taken as evidence of failure. The impact of comedy is not so easily identifiable.⁴⁷¹ While no peace talks were undertaken after the performance of the *Acharnians*, in all likelihood, this play diminished popular support for the war.

The most crucial advice that the *Acharnians* offers to its Athenian audiences is that a negotiated peace is more beneficial than war. When his fellow citizens appear blind to this truth, Aristophanes creates for Dikaiopolis a private peace. In the course of that private peace Aristophanes, via the comic vehicle of exaggeration, displays to the audience the benefits of making peace with one's neighbours.

The fact that Aristophanes finds it necessary to create a politically "deviant" character in the figure of Dikaiopolis, is a testament to the divided Athenian electorate of the time. Aristophanes *re-creates* the Athenian society in the sacred (and thereby protected) boundary of the theatre stage. In that stage Aristophanes problematizes numerous philosophical and political themes.

⁴⁷⁰ Malcolm Heath, *Political Comedy in Aristophanes* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), disputes this view by arguing that while Aristophanes focused on Athenian political life he did not aim at influencing politics.

⁴⁷¹ A survey was conducted on the eve of the 2008 American election to determine what, if any, effect the political comedy *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) have on voter opinion. This survey revealed that 10 percent of voters were influenced by SNL (*Reuters*, "The SNL Effect: 'Saturday Night Live' Political Skits Make Real Impact on Voters," <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS255618+05-Nov-2008+PRN20081105>).

One theme is that of a sustainable society. Dikaiopolis' major dissatisfaction with the urban area is that it's incapable of producing its own food - everything must be bought. To that effect, the city has to rely on other regions; rural areas and/or the sea; native and/or foreign territory. This raises problems of (in)dependence. What happened to Athens when she eventually lost access to her grain supply from Asia Minor? What happened to Ireland when (she erroneously) adapted monoculture and her only crop, potatoes, was decimated by disease between 1845-1849? What is likely to happen to us as biodiversity and genetic diversity is fast disappearing in favour of monoculture consisting of genetically modified crops that are patented by multinational corporations?⁴⁷² Dikaiopolis' prejudice against unsustainable, dependence-creating environments should not leave us indifferent.

Another theme is that of self-interest. Dikaiopolis questions the Acharnian Chorus whether anyone has benefited from the war (608-17), thereby drawing attention to this issue. By asserting that they have derived no benefits (614) but only hardships (231) Aristophanes draws a comparative contrast between the fictional and the historical Acharnian men. The historical Acharnians were suffering as a result of the war, but were, nonetheless, against peace talks (Thuc. 2.2.1). In this respect Aristophanes' depiction of the Acharnian Chorus as pugnacious and belligerent (178-185) is in line with Thucydides' historical account. The above-mentioned amounted to a paradox; voters supporting a foreign policy that was detrimental to their self-interest. From this perspective, the *Acharnians* is an ironic statement by Aristophanes that the historical Acharnians were

⁴⁷² See Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney, *Shattering: Food, Politics, and the Loss of Genetic Diversity* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1990).

ignorant in terms of their self-interest. The self-ignorance of the Acharnian Chorus reminds one of the self-ignorance displayed by the Assembly Presidents. They were mistaking the Persians and Thracians as friends when in reality they were enemies; amounting to knowing neither who were their friends nor their enemies.⁴⁷³

Aristophanes, thereby, links the element of self-interest to that of knowledge. This link becomes cemented when Dikaiopolis begins to pursue his own self-interests by signing a private peace treaty. By pursuing his own self-interest Dikaiopolis accrues numerous benefits, sparking the Acharnian Chorus to call him a *phronimon* and *ypersophon* man (971-2). Thus, according to Aristophanes, the knowledge and pursuit of one's self-interests, is a form of political wisdom. The fact that Aristophanes depicts Dikaiopolis pursuing his own self-interest, in combination with the title of the play (the *Acharnians*), I would argue, is further evidence that Aristophanes was attempting to persuade the historical Acharnians to consider their *own* self-interest. And that self-interest, contrary to the beliefs of the historical Acharnians, and other rural inhabitants, rested not with war, but with peace.

In articulating the knowledge of one's self-interest(s) as a form of political knowledge, Aristophanes does not identify self-interest with injustice. On the contrary. Considering the fact that Aristophanes wrote within the framework of an inherently fantastical genre, he could have easily created an unjust protagonist. And here one thinks of the Ring of Gyges in Plato's *Republic*. This magical ring enabled Gyges to become

⁴⁷³ I would like to thank Tom Darby for pointing this out to me.

invisible and operate with immunity inside his community.⁴⁷⁴ To be sure, Aristophanes “allows” Dikaiopolis to become “invisible” and operate with immunity inside his community. However, in contrast to Gyges, Dikaiopolis does not take what he likes out of the market without paying, nor does he kill anyone. Instead, Dikaiopolis trades with neighbouring states; refuses to be meddlesome (833); and drives out the meddling sycophants who were instigating strife with neighbouring city-states.

Dikaiopolis’ focus on his “self-interest”, and the interests of his family, have been misinterpreted by the majority of scholars as unjust. One of the reasons for this misinterpretation, it would seem to me, has to do with the difficulty of reading “small letters” as Plato’s Socrates aptly puts it in the *Republic*. When Socrates is faced with the formidable task of defining and defending justice, he begins not with the individual, but with the community. Using the analogy of reading, Socrates argues that it is best to read large letters. Taking individuals to be small letters and the polis large letters, Socrates begins his inquiry into justice by the construction of a theoretical polis. Hence, whereas Aristophanes uses the individual, Dikaiopolis (Just Polis), Plato uses the *kallipolis* (Beautiful Polis), to discuss the issue of justice. That being said, both authors move from the individual to the polis, and from the polis to the individual, and back again, in their articulation of justice. The difficulty of “reading” Dikaiopolis’ understanding of justice, I would argue, can be overcome by focusing on the symbolism of his actions and then extrapolating that meaning to the level of the polis.

⁴⁷⁴ Glaucon argues that all men would act in an unjust manner if they did not fear the consequences of their actions. Justice, according to this viewpoint, is a social construction; a useful, but not an intrinsic good (*Republic* 2.359a-2.360d).

For example, following the establishment of his private agora, one of Dikaiopolis' actions is the erection of boundaries. This indicates that boundaries are not only desirable but necessary from Dikaiopolis' viewpoint. Boundaries not only prevent the intrusion of unwanted outsiders, but they also raise awareness when one oversteps their own boundaries (thereby transgressing the boundaries of others). The violation of boundaries can occur either from ignorance or hubris. In the case of the two Athenian sycophants who enter Dikaiopolis' agora with the aim of persecuting two "enemy" traders, the transgression takes place as a result of hubris.

Another one of Dikaiopolis' actions is the announcement that he will only trade with merchants from "enemy" states on the condition that they do not sell anything to Lamachus (The Great Battler). This is a reactionary policy that stems from Dikaiopolis' disagreement with Athenian foreign policy. As a result he adapts a different one; a topsy-turvy strategy to be exact. Dikaiopolis subsequent transactions with neighbouring city-states are shown to be mutually beneficial. Put in another way, Dikaiopolis shows that diplomacy and discourse is preferential to economic embargoes and other similarly negative policies in the area of international relations. At the symbolic level Dikaiopolis' actions can be summarized with the Hebraic commandment: "Love thy neighbour as thyself".

There are a number of future research topics that can grow out of the present work. In terms of relevance to contemporary scholarship one topic could be the relationship of political satire to democracy. My argument in this work has been that, in the case of ancient Athens, political satire exhibited a symbiotic relationship to democracy.

Nonetheless, emerging scholarship on this subject exhibits a critical stance towards political satire and its effects on democracy. One example is Russell Peterson, *Strange Bedfellows: How Late-Night Comedy Turns Democracy into a Joke*, who argues that the cumulative effect of political satire is corrosive to democracy. According to this author, “If all politicians are corrupt, laughable, puffed-up egomaniacs then what difference does it make who gets your vote or whether you vote at all?”⁴⁷⁵ The same author goes on to claim that American political satirists (as a result of their endless parody of politicians) instill in their audience a cynical outlook that demoralizes voting.

Whether political satire is corrosive to democracy (a highly doubtful scenario in my opinion) is made all the more relevant considering the popularity of late-night comedy shows. In an amusing article entitled “Satirists, the world’s unacknowledged legislators,” Heather Mallick praises late night comedians the likes of Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Will Ferrell, Tina Fey and Mary Walsh.⁴⁷⁶ She argues that these comedians voice criticisms that others do not dare to articulate. Along the same lines, many commentators now admit that comedians have become an indispensable part of politics. Woe to the politician who finds himself the target of political satirists during election time.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Swanson, “Late-night comics sock it to democracy, some say,” 2008.

⁴⁷⁶ Mallick, “Satirists, the world’s unacknowledged legislators,” 2009.

⁴⁷⁷ See amongst others: Howard Kurtz “The Campaign of a Comedian” *Washington Post*, October 23, 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A55440-2004Oct22.html> , on the extent of Jon Stewart’s political impact; Patricia Moy, Michael Xenos and Verena Hess “Priming Effects of Late-Night Comedy” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 18/2 (2006): 198-210, on the ability of late-night comedy to influence the voter’s evaluation of leaders; and Paul Lewis, *Cracking Up: American Humor in a*

What makes this topic even more interesting is the fact that, beginning in the 1980's, American political satirists are moving closer and closer to the essence of Aristophanic political comedy. Late-night shows are marked by their unrestrained freedom of political satire, are temporally and spatially defined, and enjoy an unwritten, yet clearly defined, immunity from political persecution. Indeed, I would go as far as to claim that Aristophanic political comedy fell into a hibernation period in 415 BC⁴⁷⁸ only to re-emerge with the advent of American late-night shows the likes of *The Daily Show* and *Real Time with Bill Maher*.

Time of Conflict, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), on the evolution of American humour towards more cynical and hostile jokes.

⁴⁷⁸ The year that Aristophanes veered away from political comedy (Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 8).

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APPENDICES

Appendix I. The Spartan Phalanx

According to Plutarch, the Spartan King Cleomenes once said that Homer was the poet of the Spartans and Hesiod that of the helots, because the former encouraged men to make war, and the later to farm.⁴⁷⁹ This saying helps to explain the strength of the Spartan phalanx which came about as a result of the Lycurgean constitution (circa 6th century) whereby the ultimate citizen was the ultimate warrior. Apart from the reputation of the Spartan phalanx, which reached mythic proportions following the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BC), the image of the Spartan phalanx was meant to be one of intimidation. According to Cartledge, the Spartan hoplites donned long hair, bronze helmets with horsehair crests, breastplates and greaves.⁴⁸⁰ Each warrior carried a seven to nine feet long spear and a short sword. On their left hand they carried a large circular, shining, bronze shield with the letter Λ (short for Lakedaimon), painted in red against a black background. Each warrior's shield covered his entire left and front side. Their right side was covered by the shield of their fellow-warrior to the right resulting in an interlocking formation with no gaps. In battle formation they were arranged into ranks of eight-lines deep. At the onset of combat they would walk slowly towards their target while shouting the war-cry "*Eleleu!*" or "*Alala!*" During active combat, like modern-day rugby players, they operated on the principle of forward pushing and thrusting.⁴⁸¹ Unlike the chaotic

⁴⁷⁹ Quote to be found in Talbert, *Plutarch On Sparta*, 141.

⁴⁸⁰ Cartledge, "Hoplites and Heroes: Sparta's Contribution to the Technique of Ancient Warfare," 14.

⁴⁸¹ Hanson, *A War Like No Other*, 143.

environment of the rugby melee, however, the Spartan phalanx was highly coordinated and its movements were regulated to the sounds of pipes.⁴⁸²

As a whole, the image, discipline, skill, organization, and method of the Spartan phalanx “terrified any Greek hoplites unfortunate enough to regard it across the battlefield as it slowly walked to the killing zone” and just as it “was felt a terrible thing to go against the German army in the twentieth century’s two world wars, so too the Greek world recognized that it was deadly to square off against the Spartans.”⁴⁸³ When confronted with the “dreaded red-cloaked spearmen” opponents would either flee in fear, or, given the chance to attack the Spartan phalanx from the rear, the most vulnerable place in the phalanx, they would refrain (no pun intended here).

However, by surpassing all others the Spartan phalanx ensured that no one would engage them in conventional battle. Ironically, this rendered their entire land military machine worthless. A similar scenario took place in Athens. Following their naval victory at Salamis (480) the Athenians built and operated the finest navy in the Mediterranean. Their fast and deadly triremes could easily defeat any rival, especially the Spartan navy, which was the weakest in the Hellenic world. As to be expected, this led to a stalemate: the Athenians would not engage the Spartans on land, and the Spartans would not engage the Athenians on water. The war could only be won if the Athenians were to become competent hoplites, or if the Spartans were to become competent sailors. Neither proved to be the case.

⁴⁸² Cartledge, “Hoplites and Heroes: Sparta’s Contribution to the Technique of Ancient Warfare,” 14.

⁴⁸³ Hanson, *A War Like No Other*, 143.

As for the Spartan naval victory, which forced the Athenians to surrender, it should be pointed out that this so-called “Spartan” navy was built with Persian gold, manned by mercenaries, maintained with Persian gold, and commanded by Spartan *mothaxs*, sons of Spartan fathers and helot mothers who, with the exception of Callicratidas, were opportunistic and ruthless leaders the likes of Lysander.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁴ Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 283.

Appendix II: The Agon Between Poetry and Philosophy

In an 1819 poem, John Keats writes of an enchantingly beautiful female snake, Lamia, which was once a woman. It speaks of dream visions of a man by the name of Lycius whose desire for her leaves her yearning for a return to her previous human form; a transformation that is accommodated by the god Hermes. Lycius falls in love with Lamia and wishes to marry her. Lamia requests only that Lycius' philosophy teacher, Apollonius, not be invited to their wedding. Apollonius decides to go uninvited to the reception and once there, he unmasks Lamia's serpentine nature by his gaze which holds Lamia helplessly transfixed.

The philosopher's effect on the woman-serpent is described as follows,

In the bride's face where now no azure vein
Wandered on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
The deep recessed vision: ---all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white (629)⁴⁸⁵

The vampiristic stare eventually draws the life out of Lamia. Foretelling

Apollonius effect on Lamia, Keat's writes:

Philosophy will clip an angel's wings
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line
Empty that haunted air, and gnomed mine
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender personed Lamia melt into a shade (628)

⁴⁸⁵ Compare this with Nietzsche's preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart?"

...His [Lycius] phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades" (236)⁴⁸⁶

While this poem has been identified as a rebellion against neo-classicism and its emphasis on rationality,⁴⁸⁷ this by no means diminishes the fact that *Lamia* echoes one facet of the millennia-old agon between poetry and philosophy. In this ancient feud, Leo Strauss argues that the first blow did not come from the side of philosophy, namely Plato, but from the side of poetry, namely, Aristophanes.⁴⁸⁸ If we may be allowed to make a small correction here, the first blow did not originate with Aristophanes either but with Aesop. This poet tells the story of a star-gazing philosopher whose wonderment about the workings of the sky (high) leads him to forget the earth beneath his feet (low). In an apparent intertextual response to Aesop and Aristophanes alike, Plato in the *Theaetetus* names Aesop's previously anonymous star-gazer philosopher as Thales, the famous natural philosopher. Thales, recounts the Platonic Socrates, was looking upwards and "fell into a pit, and a neat, witty Thracian servant girl jeered at him, they say, because he was so eager to know the things in the sky that he could not see what was there before him at his very feet. The same jest applies to all who pass their lives in philosophy" continues Socrates, for such for a man is a "laughing-stock not only to Thracian girls but to the multitude in general, for he falls into pits and all sorts of perplexities through inexperience, and his awkwardness is terrible, making him seem a fool" (175a).

⁴⁸⁶ Nochimson, "Lamia as Muse," 38.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 39.

⁴⁸⁸ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 1966.

Judging from the tragic ending of the *Clouds* (the only Aristophanic comedy with an anomalous ending) Aristophanes appears to be suggesting something slightly different, namely, that

Philosophy calls into question the conventional morality upon which civil order in society depends; it also reveals ugly truths that weaken men's attachment to their societies. Ideally, it then offers an alternative based on reason, but understanding the reasoning is difficult and many people who read it will only understand the "calling into question" part and not the latter part that reconstructs ethics. Worse, it is unclear whether philosophy really can construct a rational basis for ethics. Therefore philosophy has a tendency to promote nihilism in mediocre minds, and they must be prevented from being exposed to it. The civil authorities are frequently aware of this, and therefore they persecute and seek to silence philosophers.⁴⁸⁹

Consequently, Plato's "noble lies" could be seen as a response to Aristophanes' concerns. That being said, Aristophanes' burlesque depictions of tick-jumping measurements and experimentations to determine the origin of gnat humming (i.e., mouth or arse?) in the Socratic *phrontistirion* became a blueprint for subsequent parodies mocking the philosophy of science. Hence, Rabelais's *Kingdom of Enteletz* where a young engineer directs his energy at extracting farts from a dead donkey, and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* where experiments seeking to reconvert human excrement to its "original constituents"⁴⁹⁰ take place, are the descendants of Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

That being said, the critique voiced in the *Clouds* is aimed at the natural Ionian philosophers whose philosophy was completely divorced from the civic, religious and political components of their society. Consequently, as Strauss argues, the Aristophanic

⁴⁸⁹ Locke, "Leo Strauss Conservative Mastermind," 2002.

⁴⁹⁰ Glasgow, *The Comedy of Mind: Philosophers Stoned, or the Pursuit of Wisdom*, 324-5.

Socrates is a “young” Socrates who was interested in natural philosophy and not the older, Platonic Socrates that we all know as the father of political philosophy.

Appendix III: Cratinus and Aristophanes

The relationship between Aristophanes and Cratinus is best understood within the context of *agon*. This concept is best articulated by Nietzsche in “Homer’s Contest” where two types of *eris* or discords are identified. The negative *eris* leads to destructive fights of annihilation, while the positive *eris* leads to creative contests. Such contests, according to Nietzsche, lay at the bottom of Xenophon and Plato’s attacks on Homer, a poet who was considered “the national hero of poetry” in ancient Greece. The concept of a non-malicious *agon*, has found a fertile soil in Platonic political philosophy. The most recent example being Nietzsche’s *own* tendency to antagonize Socrates and Plato within the framework of a “friend-enemy” exegesis whereby the dynamics of philosophical enmities are integrated within the concept of friendship.⁴⁹¹ However, the same cannot be said about Aristophanic comedy in regards to Cratinus.

While we cannot know with certainty who launched the first strike in their artistic rivalry, in all likelihood it was Cratinus when he coined the term *euripidaristophanizein*. In response, Aristophanes writes in the *Acharnians* that he wish is to see Cratinus being hit with a “fresh-shat turd” (1170-3). That wish came true (figuratively) when the *Acharnians* (1st prize) usurped Cratinus’ comedy the *Stormtossed* (2nd prize). Less than a year later Aristophanes took another jibe at Cratinus, this time in the *Knights* where, in the mist of a verbal altercation with Paphlagon (aka Cleon), the Chorus proclaims: “If I don’t hate you, may I turn into a blanket in Cratinus’ house” (400). The implications of turning into a blanket in Cratinus’ house becomes clear once we learn that Cratinus was

⁴⁹¹ Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche’s New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices*, xiv.

approximately 93-year's old in 424 BC⁴⁹² and loved his wine. In case of any lingering doubts an ancient scholiast informs us that Aristophanes was mocking Cratinus for being incontinent and a drunk.⁴⁹³ If that was not enough, a mere 156 lines later, Aristophanes, via the mouthpiece of the Chorus says,

...[Cratinus], who once rode the high wave of your applause and coursed through the open plains, sweeping oaks, plane trees, and enemies from their moorings and bearing them off uprooted. At a party there was no singing anything but "Goddess of Bribery with Shoes of Impeach Wood" and Builders of Handy Hymns," so lush was his flowering! But now you see him drivelling around town, his frets failing out, his tuning gone and his shapeliness all disjointed, but you feel no pity; no, he's just an old man doddering about, like Conn-ass wearing a withered crown and perishing of thirst, who for his earlier victories should be getting free drinks in the Prytaneum, and instead of drivelling should be sitting pretty in the front row next to Dionysus (526-36).

The above, part of a comment on the evanescent nature of audience preferences, is supposed to be a chastisement of the Athenian people for their treatment of Cratinus. Perhaps it is that, but it is also a jibe at Cratinus' diminishing artistic powers. Making the "sting" all the more painful was the fact that Cratinus was competing against Aristophanes' *Knights* (1st prize) with his *Satyrs* (2nd prize). Like a "garlic-primed" fighting rooster⁴⁹⁴ Cratinus immediately undertook the composition of *Pytine* (*Wineflask*). In this autobiographical play, where in all probability Cratinus played himself, Cratinus portrays himself as the husband of the personified Comedy who threatens to divorce him

⁴⁹² Rogers, *Peace/Birds/Frogs*, (trans) 1967: 65, 699 fn. c.

⁴⁹³ *Pytine* test. ii K-A, as quoted in Biles, "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes," 170.

⁴⁹⁴ Recall Theoros' warning for Dikaiopolis not to approach the Thracian mercenaries because they were "garlic-primed" and therefore in a fighting mood (*Acharnians* 165).

on account of his neglect and his addiction to the bottle.⁴⁹⁵ Cratinus' comedy was awarded 1st prize,⁴⁹⁶ while Aristophanes' *Clouds* won either 3rd prize or perhaps lower.⁴⁹⁷ The defeat of the *Clouds* was an anomaly considering the success of Aristophanes' earlier comedies.⁴⁹⁸ While many authors have focused on what Aristophanes did or did not do in his play,⁴⁹⁹ a more accurate approach would be to ask what Cratinus *did*. Cratinus created "a magnificent comedy whose combination of agonistic response and comic fantasy outclassed Aristophanes' entry."⁵⁰⁰ Making things worse for our young poet was the fact that the historical Socrates stood up and bowed to the audience at the end of the performance, mimicking in effect Cratinus' self-mocking stance in the *Wineflask*.⁵⁰¹ In

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ The second prize went to Ameipsias' *Connus*, a comedy named after Connus, Socrates' music teacher.

⁴⁹⁷ Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 5, n. 13.

⁴⁹⁸ Namely, *Banqueters* (2nd prize) *Babylonians* (2nd prize), *Acharnians* (1st prize) and *Knights* (1st prize).

⁴⁹⁹ Mostly that the *Clouds* was defeated because of its innovative nature which included the abandonment of the traditional elements of *komos* and *gamos*, a view held by Henderson, *Acharnians/Knights*, 27, n. 42, and echoed by Segal, *The Death of Comedy*, 70.

⁵⁰⁰ Byles, "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes," 172.

⁵⁰¹ According to Walcot, "Aristophanic and Other Audiences," 37, this story was reported by Aelian. Asked whether or not he was indignant over his treatment in the *Clouds*, Socrates replied: "No indeed... when they break a jest upon me in the theatre I feel as if I were at a big party of good friends" (Plutarch, "The Education of Children" I, 167). Also, by bowing to the spectators, Socrates "separated" himself from the audience and thereby highjacked Aristophanes' play. In the meta-theatre that Socrates creates, the actor playing Socrates loses theatrical credibility as the *real* Socrates disperses the remnants of dramatic illusion. The spectators leave the theatre not with the final image of a burning *phrontisterion* and a distraught fictional Socrates running frantically on stage, but with the image of a smiling, self-mocking, serene Socrates.

the revised version of the same play Aristophanes declares that the *Clouds* was his wisest comedy, defeated on account of ignorant judges.⁵⁰² A more likely interpretation, however, is that the *Clouds* was defeated because Aristophanes found himself in the unenviable situation of being confronted simultaneously by two “great *erotics*.”⁵⁰³

Malcolm Heath warns against the “sentimental image some have constructed of the burnt-out old poet pulling himself together for one last heroic effort” before his death (i.e., Cratinus died shortly afterwards).⁵⁰⁴ Yet, the same author admits that the conception of having the comedian “being advised by Comedy on writing a comedy in a comedy” is stunning. The truth is that the *Wineflask* is more than stunning. Although it was Aristophanes that first invoked the imagery of Comedy as a capricious mistress (“many have courted this muse, few have enjoyed her favours”)⁵⁰⁵ it is Cratinus who presents her as his wife in the *Wineflask* thereby making her no “longer a whimsical courtesan but a legitimately married woman.” Thus, Cratinus’ witty rejoinder to Aristophanes “amounts to an assertion that, although the younger poet may be enjoying some ephemeral pleasures with Comedy,” it is he, Cratinus, that has “a long-standing and legitimate claim on her affections and obligations” which were easily “demonstrated by his accumulated victories.”⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰² The fact that Aristophanes embarked on a revision knowing that the comedy would not be re-staged is significant; the only audience for the revised text would have been a minority of intellectual elites, the “few wise ones” (*Symposium* 194b).

⁵⁰³ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, §8.

⁵⁰⁴ Heath, “Aristophanes and His Rivals,” 151.

⁵⁰⁵ *Knights* 517.

⁵⁰⁶ Biles, *Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes*, 185.

Moreover, in the *Wineflask* we hear Comedy complaining that her husband Cratinus is running after every pretty little bottle, *oiniskon* (fr. 195). The humour in this line rests upon the pun between *oiniskon* (little wine bottle) and *neaniskon* (male youth).⁵⁰⁷ Considering Aristophanes' youth at the time and the fact that the *Wineflask* was written in response to him, Cratinus' pun is tantalizing to say the least. And here one says nothing about Cratinus' famous saying: "Water-drinking does not produce anything wise" (*idōr de pinōn ouden an tekois sofon*),⁵⁰⁸ a possible taunt implying that young Aristophanes was incapable of producing wise comedies because he drank only water.⁵⁰⁹ Of course, Cratinus was not the first poet to link intoxication with poetic inspiration; this distinction belonged to Archilochus who claimed a close affiliation with Dionysus.⁵¹⁰

According to Vernant, one of the functions of Dionysus was to teach human beings "how to use wine properly" in order to tame this "fierce liquid" in his capacity as the god of wine.⁵¹¹ That being said, Dionysus was also the patron god of comedy, and one of the functions of comedy was ego-deflation.⁵¹² In turn, underlying causes of ego-inflation are self-ignorance and/or overestimation of abilities, which of course are inexorably tied to lack of self-knowledge. In the *Wineflask* Cratinus openly admits that he has failed in the Dionysiac education of wine. By so doing, however, Cratinus

⁵⁰⁷ Heath, "Aristophanes and his Rivals," 150.

⁵⁰⁸ Frag. 203, my translation.

⁵⁰⁹ Or, to a lesser degree, a defiant rationalization of wine-drinking on Cratinus' part.

⁵¹⁰ "I know how to initiate a fine song for Lord Dionysus, a dithyramb, after my mind is thunderstruck with wine" (Biles, "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes," 172).

⁵¹¹ Vernant, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 203.

⁵¹² Glasgow, *The Comedy of Mind: Philosophers Stoned, or the Pursuit of Wisdom*, 1999.

demonstrates self-knowledge and a mastery of *kōmōdidaskalian*. By the same token, a person who possesses self-knowledge is not in need of comedy's corrective ego-deflation mechanism. Hence, by engaging in self-mockery, Cratinus transcends Aristophanes' taunt. Ultimately, the argument that Aristophanes was seeking to deflate Cratinus' claim of poetic superiority by "subverting the lofty image of comic inspiration and treating Cratinus' self-proclaimed reliance on wine as actual dependence"⁵¹³ is unwarranted. The last we hear of Cratinus is in Aristophanes' *Peace* (421).

Hermes: And wise Cratinus; Is he still alive? (*ti dai; Kratinos o sophos estin?*)

Trygaios: Died, when the Lakonians invaded.

Hermes: What happened? (*ti pathon?*)

Trygaios: What? Swooned (*orakiasas*). He could not bear to the shock of his wine-casks full of wine smashed and wasted (700-3).

Taking into consideration that no record exists attesting to a Spartan invasion at this time, Aristophanes is obviously taking Cratinus' death by old age and in a mythopoeitic manner constructs an admiring epitaph for the old poet. Calling a poet *sophos* was the ultimate praise, and in the end Aristophanes bestows on the old master the ultimate praise as his friend-enemy.

⁵¹³ Biles, "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes", 170.

Appendix IV: Trugōdia

Aristophanes' text reads *τρυγωδίαν* (*trugōdian*) (499) and *τρυγωδία* (*trugōdia*) (500) respectively. Henderson (1998) and Sommerstein (1980) alike render *trugōdia* as "comedy". Other authors the likes of Taplin,⁵¹⁴ Segal,⁵¹⁵ Nussbaum⁵¹⁶ and Pickard-Cambridge translate this word as *trugōidia*. A slight deviation is Zanetto,⁵¹⁷ who translates it as "*trugodia*".

In terms of etymology one finds the following accounts in the literature. Pickard-Cambridge argues that *τρυγωδία* is in origin "simply a comic parody of *τραγωδία*, giving to comedy a name which was both ludicrous and also suggestive of wine."⁵¹⁸ Bowie suggests that *trugōdia* means "wine-lees" and was meant to be a parallel term to *tragodia*,⁵¹⁹ as well as comedy's comic name for itself.⁵²⁰ Taplin argues that "*trugōdia* is a rare word and in all likelihood an Aristophanic creation."⁵²¹ John Porter synthesizes all

⁵¹⁴ Taplin, "Tragedy and Tragedy," 331.

⁵¹⁵ Segal, *Oxford Readings in Aristophanes*, 335.

⁵¹⁶ Nussbaum, "The Comic Soul: Or, This Phallus That Is Not One," 172.

⁵¹⁷ Zanetto, "Tragodia versus trugodia: la rivalità letteraria nella commedia attica," *Kômôidotragôidia: intersezioni del tragico e del comico nel teatro del V secolo a.C.*, eds. Enrico Medda, Marina Serena Mirto, Marina Pia Pattoni, (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2006), 307-25.

⁵¹⁸ Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*, 284.

⁵¹⁹ Agnus Bowie, "Myth in Aristophanes" in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*, ed. Roger D. Woodard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 200.

⁵²⁰ Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy*, 138.

⁵²¹ Taplin, "Tragedy and Tragedy," 333.

of the above-mentioned interpretations and, in specific reference to Dikaiopolis' utterance, writes the following:

The word *trugoidia* here is interesting: it is clearly a pun on *tragoidia* ("tragedy") and seems to be an Aristophanic coinage. It is based on the word *trux* ("new wine," "must") and, if taken seriously, implies the origin of comedy in a Dionysiac vintage festival (cf. Athenaeus, *Sophists at Dinner* 40a-b). It may well be, however, that it was invented by Aristophanes as a joke—a humble word designed to identify comedy as tragedy's poor second cousin, as it were. If this is true, it is possible to argue that Aristophanes is attempting to assert the same moral authority for "tragedy" as was traditionally accorded to tragedy.⁵²²

In a similar manner Helene Foley is of the mind that Aristophanes uses the word *trugōdia* to compare and contrast comedy to tragedy. She writes: "Although we cannot know how self-conscious people were about dramatic genres at this period, Aristophanes is surely involved in exploring and perhaps even defining generic boundaries and goals, and he deliberately contrasts and compares comedy and tragedy in the process (see, e.g., his use of the term *trugōidia* in *Acharnians*)."⁵²³

At this point, it would be safe to ascertain a number of points. There can be little doubt, based upon the above testimonies, that Aristophanes was responsible for the inclusion of the word *trugōdia* into the lexicon of dramatic literature. The name *trugōdia* traces its etymological roots to "wine-lees". Regardless of that origin Aristophanes uses the name *trugōdia* in the *Acharnians* for two reasons. The first

⁵²² John Porter, "Home Page of John R. Porter" (see

<http://homepage.usask.ca/~jrp638/09syllabi/227assign09.html>)

⁵²³ Helene P. Foley, Book Review, Matthew Wright, *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies: A Study of Helen, Andromeda, and Iphigenia among the Taurians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) in *American Journal of Philology* 127/3 (2006): 465-469), 468.

reason is to compare and contrast comedy to tragedy. The second reason, related to the first, was in order for him to claim for comedy the same amount of respect and legitimacy that tragedy enjoyed in the civic education of the state. In this, Aristophanes was reacting to scepticism and prejudice against comedy by intellectual elites. A prejudice, one may add, most evident in Aristotle's assertion that the serious (*ta spoudaia*) are better than the comic things (*tōn geloiōn*) (*Poetics* 1448b-1449a). Amusingly enough, in one of his last comedies Aristophanes claimed that his plays contained both *geloia* (laughable) and *spoudaia* (serious) (*Frogs* 389–90), thus highlighting the richness and complexity of his comic discourse.