

A CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

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ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY AND THE ARTS

by *Bernard Knox*

There are periods in the long history of the West that we remember for the creative genius of their artists, architects and writers rather than the political and military achievements of their governments. The Rome of Augustus, for example, is remembered by historians as an era that brought peace to a nation that had lived under the threat or in the reality of civil war for the best part of a century. But when we speak of an Augustan age we are thinking partly of the building program that in Augustus' own words "found Rome brick and left it marble," but mostly of the encouragement and support given by Augustus' friend and confidant Maecenas to writers, the favor and financial backing that made possible the work of Horace, Virgil, Tibullus and Propertius. Many centuries later, but still in Italy, Cosimo dei Medici and his son Lorenzo patronized and presided over the artistic explosion that gave us the paintings, sculpture and buildings of Botticelli, Donatello and Brunelleschi, of Michelangelo, Ghiberti and Alberti. The great achievements of the Elizabethan-Jacobean theatre, the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, and Jonson were made possible only by the patronage of the great nobles favored by the monarchs; it was such aristocratic and often royal support that enabled the theatre to obtain respectability and establish itself as a national institution, in defiance of the London merchants and clergy who regarded actors as mountebanks on a level with street-musicians and beggars, and who in 1642 closed the London theatres by an Act of Parliament. And in France, some years later, the reign of Louis XIV was a similar flowering of artistic creation. Voltaire wrote a history, *Le Siècle de Louis Quatorze*, which was, he claimed, not the description of the actions of one man, but the history of the human spirit in the most enlightened century there has ever been, *le siècle le plus éclairé qui fut jamais*. It was the age of Corneille, Racine, Moliere and La Fontaine, all of them sustained and protected by royal or ministerial favor, the age so unforgettably recorded in the letters of Madame de Sevigne and the *Memoires* of the Duc de Saint-Simon.

All of these explosions of artistic and literary creation occurred under the rule, encouragement, protection and sometimes financial

support of authoritarian regimes, whether royal as in the case of France and England or quasi-monarchical as in Rome or Florence. But the first such brilliant flowering of literary and artistic genius took place not under a monarch, but in a democracy, the world's first, that of fifth and fourth-century Athens. And it was more closely associated with and financially dependent on state support than any of its successors. At Athens it was the state, the democratic government of the *polis*, that commissioned the architects to design the temples and the sculptors to adorn them, that chose the poets to write and direct their tragedies and comedies, that paid the actors to perform them and designated rich patrons to pay the other expenses of production.

This close dependence of the arts on state support is not, however, characteristic of modern democracies. Where such a relationship does exist, though in an attenuated form—the *Comedie-Francaise* in Paris, the *Burgtheater* in Vienna—it is a legacy from the royal patrons, Louis XIV and the Empress Maria Theresa. In the English-speaking democracies, the idea of state funding for the arts has never been popular and has been slow to find support. In England, the Royal National Theatre was created and funded as recently as 1963. We have nothing of the kind over here, though during the Depression, the Federal Theater Project in the course of its short life—1935 to 1939—brought new and exciting theatre to audiences all over the country and launched on their careers directors like Orson Welles and actors like Joseph Cotton and John Huston. It was closed down in 1939 after hearings before the House Unamerican Activities Committee, a body whose expertise in the matter of the theatre can be gauged from the reaction of one of its members to the mention of Christopher Marlowe by the Project's director, Hallie Flanagan. "You are quoting from this Marlowe. Is he a Communist?" We do of course now have a National Endowment for the Arts, which is allotted a minuscule share of the federal budget, but in the few years of its existence, it has had to face the same kind of hostility from politicians who would like to abolish it, insisting that the government has no right to use taxpayers' money for the arts.

To a fifth-century Athenian, the idea that government should not concern itself with such matters as art, architecture and the theatre would have seemed bizarre. For one thing, most of the artistic activity that went on in Athens was intimately connected with the city's worship of its patron gods. The temples on the Acropolis, dedicated to Athena Parthenos and the legendary Athenian King Erechtheus, as well as the temple above the Agora dedicated to the mythical founder

of Athens' greatness, Theseus, were all sacred dwelling places for the gods and heroes on whose continued favor Athens depended for its success in war and prosperity in peace. And the great festivals—the procession and the musical and athletic contests of the Panathenaea, the Dionysia, with its performances of tragedy and comedy—were rituals of the city's religion. The procession at the Panathenaea, from the gates of Athens to the Parthenon, carried a newly woven robe for the goddess in her temple and at the Dionysia the statue of the god was seated in the front row of the theatre to watch the dances and the plays performed as acts of his worship. Both of these events were civic festivals as well as religious rituals and no citizen would have seen anything strange in the state's assumption of responsibility for them. For the democratic Athenian citizen was involved in the communal life of the *polis* to an extent that, for us, is hard to imagine.

The ancient Greek *polis* (by which we mean Athens, the only one on which we are relatively well informed) made demands on its male citizens which today would be considered unreasonable. It expected and obtained military service (combat service, not chairborne) for its all too frequent wars—from the battle of Plataea in 479 B.C. to that of Chaeronea in 338, Athens had not one interval of peace longer than ten years, and most of them were shorter. Men were liable for campaigns beyond the frontiers up to the age of fifty; and might be called on to defend the city walls until they had passed their sixtieth year. By its jealous restriction of citizenship, the city in effect limited its citizens' choice of wives, and its wealthy citizens were liable to special income taxes as well as 'liturgies'—public service which could range from the organization and financial responsibility for a dramatic performance to equipment of a warship. Participation in the meetings of the Assembly and as jurors in the law courts was not, as far as we know, enforced, but it was certainly expected: "We alone," says Pericles, "regard the man who holds aloof from the city's business not as 'quiet' but as useless" — *achreios*, a harsh word of condemnation.

The force of such public opinion should not be underestimated. In the modern megalopolis it is possible to live a completely private and anonymous life, but in the ancient Mediterranean city, crowded, walled, and built for outdoor living, public disapproval, concentrated and oppressive, could not be ignored. There was no escape from daily contact with one's fellow citizens. Even in peacetime, communal cult and sacrifice could not be avoided, and in war, the male citizen, side by side on the rowing bench of a war galley or shield by shield in the Hoplite phalanx, was an integral member of the body politic. The city

demanded a loyalty that overrode all others.

That the call was answered is clear from the extraordinary record of Athenian military activity in the years between 490 and 404, and the recognition on the part of Athens' enemies that they were facing no ordinary adversary. "They devote their bodies to their country," say the Corinthians in Thucydides, "as though they belonged to other men, and their minds, their dearest possessions, to action in her service.... In all these activities they wear themselves out with exertions and dangers throughout their entire lives. None enjoy their good things less because they are always seeking for more. To do their duty is their only holiday, and they regard peaceful repose as no less a misfortune than incessant fatigue. In a word, if a man should say of them that they were born never to live at peace themselves and to prevent the rest of the world from doing so, he would be speaking the simple truth."

This harsh assessment, offered by a spokesman for a city which had good cause to hate the Athenians, but there is much truth in it. Quite apart from the service the city demanded in its wars, it expected full participation in its government from every citizen. When Pericles spoke of "the city's affairs" from which "useless people held aloof" he was not talking about voting in election every four years. The Athenian citizen was expected to attend the sessions of the Assembly; it met forty times regularly in the course of the year and there were additional meetings if the Council of Five Hundred considered them necessary. The five hundred members of the Council were replaced every year; a man might serve twice in his lifetime but no more, so that over the years, a great many citizens would find themselves in a position of great responsibility: preparing business for the Assembly, receiving and dealing with foreign envoys, supervising the work of the elected magistrates, providing for naval shipbuilding and the maintenance of the fleet and the docks, to name only the most important duties of the Council. In addition to this, almost every Athenian citizen would spend time on jury duty, for juries could run to huge numbers. Socrates, for example, was tried before a jury of five hundred. One can only wonder when the Athenian citizen managed to look after his own affairs and earn a living. And in fact, Pericles introduced payment for jury duty and in the fourth century pay was offered for attendance at the Assembly.

But, though the Corinthians' vivid characterization of Athenian activism is basically true to fact, it is very wide of the mark when it announces that for Athenians "their only holiday is to do their duty." The word translated 'holiday' is *heorte*, which means something more

like 'festival' (a meaning it has retained in its modern Greek form *yiorti*) and the calendar of the Athenian year was studded with festivals great and small; so many, in fact, that the anonymous author of a fifth-century pamphlet on the Athenian constitution, known because of his anti-democratic bias as *The Old Oligarch*, complains that the Athenians celebrate more festivals than any other city in Greece, and later, more specifically, that they have twice as many festivals as do other city-states.

Pericles, in his famous panegyric of democracy in the *Funeral Speech*, mentions in passing the fact that "we have provided for the spirit many relaxations from toil; we have games and sacrifices at regular intervals throughout the year...." This modest formula glosses lightly over a formidable annual cycle of festivals that provided the Athenian not only with spectacle (in the form of dances, tragedies, comedies), athletic, musical and literary contests, and processions, but also with public feasts, all of which involved sacrifice to the gods. And sacrifice meant the distribution of that rarity in the Athenian diet, meat, to those attending the event. We have some figures on how much meat was made available to the celebrants at some of the festivals. At the annual celebration of the victory over the Persians at Marathon, 500 goats were sacrificed. (The number should have been 6400, the number of Persian dead counted after battle, for before it, the Athenians had vowed to sacrifice a goat to Artemis for every Persian they killed, but to keep their word they would have had to slaughter the entire goat population of Attica and probably import some goatmeat into the bargain). At the *Dionysia* bulls were sacrificed; for the year 330, we have the figure of 240. At the *Olympia* on one occasion, the sale of the hides of the sacrificial victims brought in the handsome sum of 671 drachmas. And at the *Panathenaea* 100 cattle went under the knife.

This festival, a celebration of the birthday of Athena, took place in the first month of the Athenian year, which unlike our first month, was in midsummer. The occasion was the annual presentation to Athena, that is, to her statue in the Parthenon, of a new robe. Originally the robe was small, like the statue in the old temple that was destroyed by the Persians in 480, but for the new statue, forty feet high, that was housed in the new temple dedicated in 438, the robe was as big as a ship's sail. It was in fact taken, mounted on a cart built like a ship, on its processional route from the western gate of Athens through the narrow streets and the broad open Agora all the way up to the Acropolis. It was followed by groups representative of the whole population; young girls carrying offerings in baskets on

their heads, infantry and cavalry detachments, a group of old men specially chosen for their good looks, representatives of the resident aliens, and even, we are told, recently freed slaves.

By the sixth century B.C., however, what had been originally an annual processional homage to the goddess had been enlarged. Every fourth year it became a great festival lasting three or four days, an event modeled on the great games held at four-year intervals at Olympia, Delphi and elsewhere. There were athletic contests—foot race, horse race, chariot race, boxing, wrestling, and so on—with separate events for men and boys. There were competitions for rhapsodes reciting the Homeric epics, for singers accompanying themselves on a stringed instrument, the cithara, and for singers accompanied by a player on the flute. There were team events, the Pyrrhic dance, for example, a dance performed by men in armor; and there was a regatta, which took place in the harbor at Piraeus. For all these events prizes were awarded, and not just the famous crown of wild olive that is so often cited as proof of ancient Greek devotion to the sport itself, but rather material rewards. The prizes for the professional musicians, for example, did include crowns of wild olive, but they were gilded, and the victor also received cash; the winner of the contest for song and cithara received a crown worth one thousand drachmas and five hundred drachmas in silver, and the second, third and fourth runners-up were rewarded on a descending scale. The competitors were obviously professionals attracted to the Athenian festival from all over the Greek world, and though we have no record of the prizes offered for the rhapsodes who recited Homer, they too must have competed for valuable prizes. Ion, the rhapsode in Plato's dialogue, is a native of Ephesus and has just come to Athens from a festival at Epidaurus, where he won a crown.

For the athletic programs we have figures only for the boys' events. Presumably those for the grown men were higher but those for the boys are impressive enough. The winner in the foot race, for example, received fifty jars of olive oil, the oil that was made from the olive trees grown in groves sacred to Athena, and the jars were large amphoras, the Panathenaic vases that are to be seen in so many modern museums; on one side Athena, armed as a warrior and on the other side, the contest for which the prize was awarded.

The most important event of the festival, however, was the procession, and it so happens that we still possess a most remarkable recreation of it; not in words but in stone: the marble frieze, 160 meters long and one meter high, that ran all around the Parthenon, forty feet above the marble pavement inside the outer line of

columns. It shows selected elements of the procession: the girls who carry baskets filled with offerings to Athena, the chariots and their riders, the cavalry, the old men, the sacrificial cattle and the gods, who watch the proceedings. Even in its scattered remnants, in London, Paris, and Athens, it is still, though worn by time and weather, a thing of extraordinary beauty, and where the best preserved sections of it are displayed, high on the walls of a room devoted to it in the British Museum, it still projects an overwhelming impression of nobility and tragic dignity.

The temple for which this frieze was carved was part of one of the most remarkable public building programs ever undertaken. Augustus claimed that he had found Rome brick and left it marble, but the Athenians, when they returned home after the Persian retreat in 479, found their city a ruin; the houses burned, the temples on the Acropolis demolished, their statues defaced and broken. They buried the statues, and many centuries later archaeologists dug them up—the *korai* (the girls with enigmatic smiles) and the Kritios boy, which we had the privilege of seeing here in Washington at the National Gallery not long ago, were all recovered from the ground. But the Athenians were much too busy to rebuild more than their houses, for they were fully engaged in carrying on the war against Persia, liberating the Greek cities of the Aegean islands and the coast of Asia Minor. But they did rebuild the walls of Athens, so that as tension rose between Athens and her one-time ally Sparta, the city would not lie defenseless. In any case, after the final victory over the Persians on Greek soil at Plataea, the Greek cities had vowed to leave the ruined temples unrestored, as a monument to Persian barbarity and a memorial of Greece's heroic struggle.

But by mid-century, the Athenians were the greatest Hellenic power; their victorious fleet maintained by contributions from the more than four hundred cities of the league Athens had organized against Persia, but which had become tribute-paying subject allies, protected against Persia by Athenian sea-power but deprived of what Greek cities prized above everything else—their autonomy as sovereign states. For the Athenians it was time to rebuild the temples on the Acropolis as homes worthy of the gods who had brought the city to this height of power and prosperity, and under Pericles' direction, the work began. The Parthenon, the temple of the virgin Athena, was dedicated, with its great cult statue, in 438; it was finished by 432, just before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. The Propylaea, the magnificent entrance to the Acropolis, was built around 435, but the Erechtheion, a building whose elegant Ionian style presented a

feminine counter to the male Doric of the Parthenon, was built during the war, long after Pericles' death, from 421 to 407. The material for all these structures, like that for the Theseion overlooking the Agora, the Odeion, a concert hall for musical performances, and the new initiation hall for the Mysteries at Eleusis, was the fine marble quarried on Mount Pentelicon a few miles north of Athens, a marble of such high quality that it retained much of its original brilliant sheen until the pollution of the Athenian atmosphere began to break it down in the years since the Second World War.

Pericles' building program met with fierce opposition from his political opponents, who denounced the use of tribute money from the subject allies for what they described as "beautifying and gilding the city as if it were a vain woman, covering herself with precious stones, expensive statues and temples worth millions." In reply, Pericles pointed out that the Athenian fleet protected the cities from the Persian threat, a defense that had much validity, as is clear from the fact that in the last years of the Peloponnesian War, with Athenian sea-power crippled after the huge losses in Sicily, Sparta obtained help from Persia by promising the return of the Greek cities on the Asia Minor coast to Persian rule. But Pericles had a further justification of the program, one that has a resonance for modern ears. It would not only bring Athens eternal glory, he said; it would also provide immediate prosperity by stimulating activity and creating needs of all kinds, energizing every craft and employing every hand, putting large elements of the citizen body on the public payroll. "Rather than have the mass of common laborers supported in laziness and idleness," Plutarch tells us, "he suggested programs of ... designs for works that would call many arts and crafts into play for long periods of time." The program did indeed set to work carpenters, bronzesmiths, stonemasons (like Socrates and his father before him), sculptors, painters, dyers, embroiderers, goldsmiths, silversmiths and workers in ivory, not to mention the wagon-makers, the drivers that carted the marble from Pentelicus, the quarrymen and miners, the rope- and leather-workers and the road-builders. Of the resulting buildings, Plutarch, who saw them some six hundred years after completion of the work, wrote: "Each one of them, in its beauty, was even then and at once antique; but in the freshness of its vigor it is, even to the present day, recent and newly wrought. Such is the bloom of perpetual newness, as it were, upon these works... which makes them look always untouched by time, as though the unfaltering breath of an ageless spirit had been infused into them." And almost two thousand years later his works still ring true. Worn by time and weather, smashed by

the explosion of a Turkish ammunition dump hit by artillery fire from a Venetian battery commanded by a German, broken by inept anti-quaries hauling sculptures off to foreign countries, they still, where they have not suffered the even more insidious ravages of modern industrial pollution, look as if "the unfaltering breath of an ageless spirit had been infused into them."

The Panathenaea was a midsummer festival centered on the procession to the temple of Athena, but the other great festival of the Athenian year, one that took place early in the spring, was a celebration of a male god, Dionysos, a deity who, unlike Athena, does not appear in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* presiding over the destinies of the Achaean heroes on the battlefields of Troy and on their voyages home. He was a latecomer to the Olympian pantheon, a god who promised release from the monotonous, relentless labor of the agricultural year and fulfilled that promise by his gift of fermentation of the wine. His was a popular cult, not dominated by the hereditary priests of the aristocratic families, and his festival had been established by Pisistratus, the *tyrannos* whose rule preceded the foundation of Athenian democracy and who had made the Panathenaea an event of national importance.

Dionysos was worshipped with dance and song; the principal medium of his ritual was the performance of a dithyramb, a hymn sung by a dancing chorus of fifty men or boys. When the festival was fully established, well-known poets like Pindar and Simonides composed dithyrambs for the event. Under the democracy, the dithyrambic choruses of men and boys, organized as a competition between the ten Athenian tribes, were, because of the emotional involvement of the audience in the inter-tribal competition and the devotional content of the hymns, an exciting prelude to the events of the succeeding days, which were devoted to tragedy, satyr play and comedy. Aristotle tells us that tragedy developed from the dithyramb but does not tell us how; all we know is that the addition of a masked actor to the chorus by Thespis and of another by Aeschylus resulted in the creation of the first theatre of the Western world. By mid fifth century the audience in the theatre of Dionysos had seen the production of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and was soon to see such masterpieces as Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus*, Euripides' *Medea* and *Hippolytus*, Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, *Clouds* and *Birds*. The Athenian Dionysia, held in the spring when the seas were safe for sailing again after the winter storms, drew spectators from cities far and wide. Like the buildings under construction on the Acropolis, it was a proclamation of Athens' preeminence in the Greek world.

But it was very expensive. Actors who could make themselves heard by an audience of some seventeen thousand people seated in an open-air theatre were in short supply (we know that Sophocles had to give up acting in his own plays because his voice was not strong enough) and they could command high prices. The dithyrambic choruses, as well as those for tragedy and comedy, would need months of training and rehearsal, and they would also need costumes, as would the actors. And there were prizes: first, second and third for the poets and one prize for the best actor. We have little or no information about the prizes and the payment of the actors and have to assume that the expense was met from state funds. But there is no reason to think that the prizes would have been any less generous than those offered at the Panathenaea, and those, as we have seen, were princely. For the expenses incurred for the rehearsal and production of the dithyrambs, tragedies and comedies we do, however, have some figures. We have them because the payments were made not from state funds, but from the pockets of private citizens designated for this duty by the city magistrates; and in some cases, those citizens later mentioned in a court case, how much they had spent as they tried to impress the jury with their democratic and patriotic credentials.

This state-appointed patron of the theatre was called a *choregos* and he and his fellow patrons were appointed by a city magistrate at the beginning of the year, three for tragedy and five for comedy (though later, in the difficult days of the war, the number of comedies was reduced to three). Obviously those appointed had to be wealthy men, but if one of them felt unfairly treated he could name another citizen, wealthier than himself, who might more justly be appointed and offer, to prove his contention, to exchange property with him. But in fact few of those chosen tried to evade the assignment. For one thing, such service could always be cited in a law court, where wealthy men were very liable to appear sooner or later, as proof of democratic loyalty. We have a speech written by Lysias for a client accused of accepting bribes while in office as a magistrate; he cites an extraordinary number of such assignments and lists the expense involved. "Appointed to produce tragic drama," he says, "I spent thirty minae, and two months later, at the Thargelia, two thousand drachmas.... later, at the Great Panathenaea, eight hundred drachmas on Pyrrhic dancers. I spent five thousand drachmas for a dithyrambic chorus of men at the Dionysia and three hundred on a chorus at the little Panathenaea." These are very large sums. A mina is one hundred drachmas, and a drachma six obols. Three obols was the equivalent of a day's pay at the minimum wage — it was the daily

pay of the old men who sat on the juries. So thirty minae, the sum mentioned for his tragic choregic service, amounts to three thousand drachmas, which in turn is eighteen thousand obols, the equivalent of six thousand days' work at the minimum wage.

The *choregos* appointed for tragedy had a heavy responsibility. He had to pay for the long training of the chorus and for its costumes, for the trainer, the flute player, and for any special effects agreed on with the poet, for example, the extra chorus of huntsmen in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, the escort for the Furies turned Eumenides in the final play of the *Oresteia*, for the chorus of frogs in Aristophanes' comedy. The poet assigned a generous choregos and could count on brilliant costumes and support for any extra expenses his production might demand; we are told that Nicias, who was very wealthy, spent handsomely when he was choregos and that his poet always won the prize. On the other hand we hear of one called Melanthios, who when his actor, playing a queen, refused to appear unless given a proper escort of servants, told him not to give himself airs, that the wife of Phocion, Athens' leading statesman at the time, had only a single maid. It seems likely, too, that the choregos was supposed to entertain actors and chorus at a banquet after the performance—the chorus of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* complains that on some previous occasion, Antimachus sent it away supperless.

But besides the poets, actors, and chorus, there were other expenses involved. The theatre was not equipped with marble benches until late in the fourth century; in the great age of Athenian tragedy, wooden planks were laid down on the stepped embankment overlooking the dancing floor and the stage. This work was leased out to private contractors, who probably also cleaned the theatre up between one day's performances and the next. They would have had plenty to do: the audience was there all day and had brought something to stave off hunger—Aristotle tells us that they started to eat if the actors were bad—and though they didn't have popcorn and Coke bottles, they undoubtedly left a mess behind them. In exchange for these services, the contractors were allowed to charge admission; the price of a ticket was two obols. But those citizens for whom this was too much of a burden were provided with the price of a ticket from a special state fund.

There were no reserved seats, except for the front rows reserved for the priest of Dionysos, the magistrates, the members of the Council and visiting foreign dignitaries. Otherwise, it was a democratic first come first served, except that we do have some passages that suggest that women were restricted to seats at the back or at the far

sides. Many scholars, however, have concluded that women were not admitted to the performances at all, and it is true that in three passages where a comic poet, Aristophanes in the first and Menander in the other two, asks the audience to applaud, he mentions men and boys of all ages but no women. Perhaps, it has been suggested, women did not want to draw attention to themselves by applauding. But one thing is certain: Plato, in three places, on in the *Gorgias* and two in the *Laws*, obviously takes for granted the presence of women in the audience. He is writing in the fourth century (though he must have been to the theatre in the fifth) and it seems unlikely that if so radical a change in the composition of the audience had occurred between these two centuries we should not have heard of it. The reason many modern scholars are reluctant to believe that women were present seems to be the explicit sexuality of the satyr play that followed the three tragedies—the chorus all wore a *phallos*—and the riotous obscenity of many of the jokes in the comedy that followed. Some have even suggested that women were allowed to see the tragedies and then had to leave before the satyrs came on. But such a suggestion ignores the fact that Athenian women were perfectly accustomed to the public exhibition of the phallos, not only at the rural Dionysia, where it was carried on a pole, but also on the Hermes figure that stood outside every Athenian house. Not to mention the women's festival called Haloa, at which they ate pastries baked in the shapes of male and female sexual organs, told each other lewd stories and listened to the priestess who whispered in their ears suggestions that they should commit adultery with other wives' husbands. In any case, the Dionysia, like the Panathenaea, was a celebration that involved the whole of the city in its events, and in the sacred stories of Dionysos, as we know from the Euripidean *Bacchae* and many other sources, women played a major role. The Dionysia was, like the Panathenaea, a city-wide festival. And in its creation of the first theatre of the Western world, it was perhaps the most important result of Athenian democracy's governmental support of the arts.

In the last speech Pericles made before his death of the plague (or perhaps we should say in the last of the speeches reported by Thucydides) he envisaged the possibility that Athens might lose the war in which it was engaged (though he phrased that possibility in very diplomatic language) and offered some consolation if that should prove to be the case. "You should recognize," he said, "that our city has the greatest name in all the world because she does not yield to misfortunes, but has sacrificed more lives and endured severer hardships in war than any other; therefore, she also has the greatest

power of any State up to this day, and the memory of her glory will always survive. Even if we should some day weaken a little, for by nature all things decline—yet will the recollection live, that, of all Hellenes, we ruled over the greatest number of Hellenic subjects; that we withstood our enemies, whether single or united, in the most terrible wars; and that we were the inhabitants of a city endowed in every way with the most ample resources and greatness.”

But these are not the reasons we remember Athens. We remember the democratic Athens that for all its faults, produced Thucydides (though it exiled him) and Socrates (though it executed him), that listened to Plato (though he despised it) and sheltered Aristotle (though he condemned it), that built the temples that even in their ruins leave us awe-struck and created and supported the first theatre of the West, leaving us, from the enormous wealth of its dramatic production—the hundreds of plays produced by its three great tragedians and its one comic genius—a handful of plays that, like the ruins of the Acropolis, can still stun us with the greatness of their vision and the power of their speech and action.

There is a play running on Broadway at the moment that was one of three written by a poet who was selected by the magistrate for the Dionysia of 431 B.C., financed by a choregos also selected by the magistrate, and performed by actors paid by the state. Though it only won third prize (this may have been the fault of the other two plays performed with it, the *Philoctetes* and the *Dictys*), the *Medea* made an indelible impression on the audience. As it still does. A recent visitor to the theatre wrote in the New York Times: “We sit mesmerized, horrified, absolutely still, not a cough in the house, for ninety astounding minutes as Euripides gives us a lesson in what theatre is all about.” And if we are to believe Plutarch, it was its subsidized theatre that saved Athens and its temples from complete destruction after the unconditional surrender to the Spartans in 404. “Some say,” he reports, “that a proposition to sell the Athenians into slavery was actually made in the assembly of the allies and that, at this time, Erianthus the Theban made a motion that the city be razed to the ground and the country round about it left for sheep to graze. Afterwards, however, when the leaders were gathered at a banquet, and a man from Phocis sang the first choral ode in the *Electra* of Euripides, the one that begins *Agamemnonos o kora*—‘Daughter of Agamemnon/ Electra, I’ve run all the way/ to your home in the wild hills’—all present were moved to compassion and felt it would be an atrocity to destroy a city that was so famous and was the mother of such poets.” ■

PARTICIPATORY VS. REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

By Dr. Robert Connor

I think we ought to start with a special word of thanks to the Society for The Preservation of The Greek Heritage and especially to Bernard Knox for arranging this colloquium. This gathering might be regarded as a contribution to biological diversity. We have many endangered species in this country at the moment, one of which is serious public discourse; another is our awareness of what we owe to the past and how the past can illuminate thinking about the present. The Society for The Preservation of The Greek Heritage has been doing an important service in preserving both of those endangered species through this and many other projects.

A certain perspective comes from looking back to ancient Athens, and especially to Athenian democracy after twenty-five hundred years. It's similar to the perspective a friend of mine noticed on the Maine island where he vacations in the summer. Everything comes in to that island by boat at the pace the weather and the captain allow. The newspapers are always a day late. My friend was standing in the general store when a new summer person jostled his way into line, using the sharp elbow that works so well in his urban home, and said, "I want a copy of the *New York Times*." The store owner said, "Do you want today's paper or yesterday's?" "Today's paper, of course." "Well, you'll have to wait 'til tomorrow for that."

There is something to be said for waiting until tomorrow from time to time, before immersing oneself in contemporary events. It brings a little perspective to some of the material.

When I was asked to speak at this gathering, I accepted with alacrity. I thought it was a great gathering, a wonderful topic, and a first-rate program. When they asked me to speak on participatory versus representative democracy, I agreed and thought, "That is fine, I know how to do that, I know what to say about it. Participatory democracy is a capital "G" Good, capital "T" Thing. It is one of the wonderful things that we know about in this country through New England town meetings. It is the real democracy. The Athenians had it too. They had it despite the fact that their society was larger than any New England town. They had it despite the fact that Athens was not a face-to-face city, despite the fact that its population in the fifth

century was somewhere in the 350,000 to 500,000 range, distributed—as any marathon runner in the audience will know—over a rather jagged piece of territory whose radius is a little over twenty-six miles. Indeed, one might say, the ability to maintain direct participatory democracy under those circumstances would be one of the marks of what we used to call the Greek Genius.

Modern democracies, on the other hand — we know about them, too, don't we? They are representative democracies and we know that representative democracies have serious problems, as we are constantly reminded by some very aggressive critics. It's tempting to join those critics of representative democracy and then move on to the really important question. That is, do we have a solution to this? Has the new electronic technology given us the way to recreate a direct participatory democracy in the United States? Will we soon be able to sit back next to the wonderful information highway full of interactive PC/TV, and push the button to vote "yea" or "nay." Can we dispense with politicians and make direct democracy work once again?

At that point there loomed before me an image of the past. Was it Banquo's ghost or the *Commendatore*? No, it was Miss Bartlett from my high school, my English teacher, who insisted that we always write out definitions of our terms before we used them. There she was again, after all these years, and I thought, "She's right." I started to write down a definition of participatory democracy, and I found that it is very hard to do. It is hard to do even if you slip past the question of how you are going to define democracy. I decided I would just concentrate on the participatory part and wrote down, "A system of government in which all major political decisions are made by those citizens who choose to be present at the time and place the issue is decided."

I didn't feel very happy with that. There are some difficulties in it, as you can quickly see. One of the difficult terms is "citizens," but I don't want to stop on that. It's troublesome for ancient democracy, and many critics have made the valid point that the franchise was significantly restricted in classical Athens. Women were excluded, slaves were excluded, resident foreigners were excluded from full citizen's rights. The concern of these critics, but not their conclusion, was that Athens did not have a real democracy. But anybody who lived in Athens before the fifth century B.C., anybody who lived in other Greek cities and understood what aristocracy and oligarchy meant, would recognize that there was something very different in the Athenian system. That is not to say it was without problems, flaws or

deeply troubling exclusions. It wasn't a perfect democracy. But, nonetheless, something very important was going on in that society—something important for us to know about.

But that phrase, "choose to be present," is a key to participatory democracy, and it raises some further question for the student of ancient democracy. "Choose" obscures some of the practical difficulties the Athenians encountered when they began to make the decision whether they were going to go down from Marathon, twenty-six miles or so to participate in the *ecclesia* (the assembly of all citizens), forty different times or more over the course of a year. If you were a small farmer from Marathon, your means of transportation into the central city was probably going to be your two feet. I don't know about you, but I have never walked twenty-six miles in a day and I am not about to volunteer for it. If I am going to walk that distance, I am going to take at least two days off from work. If you say I can do it on a horse, I will still do it in two days and I expect I'll be very, very sore when I get there.

The practical difficulties of participating in the Athenian democracy, let us not confuse ourselves, were very substantial. As Bernard Knox pointed out last night, it was not until the fourth century B.C. that citizens were paid for participation in the Assembly of Athens, and that pay would scarcely have made up for the losses encountered by citizens who left their work to participate in the Assembly.

So there were many restraints on participatory democracy in Athens. Now let's look at that phrase "all major political decisions." That is an exceedingly high standard for any democracy, direct or participatory. Did you have a chance to say anything to the Federal Reserve Board when they last decided to raise your interest rate? Is that a political decision or isn't it? It surely has major political effects. Did you have a chance to tell the Supreme Court how to vote on various issues? Of course not.

If we ask, then, where were most political decisions made in Athens, we begin to recognize an added layer of complexity to these questions we have been investigating. The answer to that question is provided by about every well-preserved Athenian official inscription of the fifth and fourth centuries. When you look at these decrees, they begin by telling us where and by whom the decision was made. "It seemed best to the *Boule* and to the *Demos*." That is, to the Council and to the Assembly, to both of them. So, by following the injunction of Miss Bartlett, I found myself forced to shift away from the talk I thought I could give you, abandon an exclusive focus on the Athenian Assembly, and start discussing the Athenian Council. As

soon as one does that, one also switches the focus from the wonders of participatory democracy to the somewhat peculiar form of representative democracy that prevailed in Athens during the fifth-century B.C.

What was this Council? It consisted of five hundred citizens, each serving for one year, no extensions. You might come back to serve again after ten years or so, but a very strong principle of rotation was in use. The members had been chosen by and from local neighborhoods and villages, roughly 140 such little units, some in the city of Athens, some outside in the hills, some in the plains and along the shore of Attica, each one called a *demos*. I will use the word “deme” for those neighborhoods. It looks very much as if those five hundred annual councillors were chosen in those scattered demes on a basis roughly proportionate to the population in those neighborhoods at the very end of the sixth century.

These councillors were organized in ten tribes, in other words, fifty in each. Each group of fifty would preside at the Assembly during their tenth of the year. Then the next fifty would come in and by the end of the year all would have had a presiding role. That gave Athens five hundred “Presidents” each year! But what power did they have? They set the agenda, they drafted proposals, they enforced procedural rules and, just to confound your high school civics course, they carried out some judicial duties and conducted various administrative chores. So they were legislative and executive and judicial.

That is a very important cluster of duties, but I want to focus on one of them: agenda setting. Those of you who know New England town meetings recognize that what gets on the “warrant” for that meeting is absolutely crucial. The warrant sets the topics that will be discussed and it usually includes quite specific proposals to deal with those issues. Those have been set well in advance of the meeting. They don’t just come up spontaneously in a general bull session on the evening of the meeting. They have been set by the town elders in various ways, depending on what town or what state you are in. And they clearly determine what can be discussed. They frame the terms of the discussion.

A well-drafted warrant is essential if so-called participatory democracy is to work, if those meetings are not to lapse into chaos. Even in very small towns it is crucial that the agenda be set carefully and thoughtfully and that the terms of the discussion be very carefully defined. I think it is true in contemporary New England and I believe very strongly that it was true in, and a key to the success of, Athenian democracy in the fifth century before our era.

I suggest then that an assignment to set the agenda, frame the issues, draft the proposals — if you have ever run a board meeting, you know — is a very substantial power if skillfully used. One can argue about the extent and the significance of that power, the relative role of the Council and of the Assembly in classical Athens. Scholars argue about it today and I believe politicians argued about it in antiquity. No doubt the powers changed over time. But the basic point is very clear, that the Council enjoyed very substantial power.

It could be very frustrating indeed, if you weren't seeing that power used in the way you wanted. Think, for example, of the beginning of Aristophanes' play, the earliest fully preserved comedy, the *Acharnians*, produced in 425 BC. Visualize an empty stage, and Dicaeopolis sitting there all alone. The Assembly was supposed to convene, but where were the members of the Council, the presiding group, who were supposed to get the show on the road? They hadn't appeared and he wanted to push forward on what meant so much to him—stopping this stupid Peloponnesian War and getting a peace.

There was Dicaeopolis alone in the PNYX, the Assembly place, sitting there soliloquizing:

I have measured out my life in peptic ulcers.

Pleasures, sparse.

Quite sparse....

My life is Destiny's Dump.

Come right down to it, what Pleasure have I known that truly deserved the title of Unalloyed Joy?

The first was that warm, satisfied, happy glow in my stomach when I saw Kleon fairly caught in that comedy by Aristophanes, compelled to belch up those five talents.

That was a tonic. The Knights won my inexpressible love for managing that. What a delicious day for Hellas!

But that blessing was blotted out, of course, by the torment of a terrible tragedy. Tingling in anticipation of an Aischylos revival, aching and gaping in the audience, I heard the announcement: "THEOGNIS WILL PRESENT HIS PLAY."

Theognis? It felt more like Thrombosis, I tell you....

But never, ever, since I began to wash, have I been so bitten in my brows by soap as now, when there's a stated meeting of the Assembly called

for dawn, and here's the PNYX—completely empty!
 Everybody's down at the Agora, gabbing, cackling,
 running away from the Masters-at-Arms. Nobody's
 going to rope *them* into their civic duty. No, sir!
 The Presiders haven't even come. Oh, they will —
 late, shoving and jostling—you know how —
 streaming down in a bunch to get the first bench;
 but they don't give a damn for peace and how to get it.
 Oh, Athens, Athens!
 So I come to Assembly—as usual, first—and sit.
 But what's to do when you're all alone?
 Well,
 I sigh,
 I yawn,
 I stretch...
 sometimes I fart.
 I try to think of things to do..
 I write...
 I pluck out my gray hairs...
 I balance my books...

Becoming conscious of his finger-counting and thus his unhappiness, he lapses briefly into declamation:

I fix my eyes upon my fields and lust for Peace.
 I loathe the stingy, greedy city. I long
 for my own ungrudging countryside, my generous village,
 my openhearted home sweet home. It never barked,
 “Buy coal! Buy oil! Buy vinegar!” Gratis it gave me
 everything, unstintingly supplied my wants and that blasted city
 byword “BUY”—
 Goodbye to that!
 So here I am. By god, I'm ready to boo,
 to interrupt, to heckle every speaker who dares
 to say a word on any subject but Peace.

Well, look! They come. The Presiders—and it's noon.
 Didn't I tell you? Just what I was saying:
 Every last one of them pushing to sit up front.*

That is Aristophanes' comic rendition, of course, of a setting in Athens that, one way or another, many Athenians must have encountered. The operating of the Assembly, the real participatory democra-

cy, depended upon this jostling bunch of Presiders, who set the agenda, framed the terms of the discussion, and, as Dicaeopolis discovered, would not allow certain things to be discussed. What would one of those Presiders then say to Dicaeopolis? Perhaps something like this: "Democracy requires a carefully set agenda. It requires order and direction. Yes, it even requires from time to time the exclusion of topics that it would be premature to discuss at a certain stage of diplomacy in our national life."

The control of democratic decision-making in Athens, one might say, then, was in the hands of a relatively small group, those wonderful Presiders. Were they an elite? Probably not—just a group that had the flaws and the strengths and was broadly representative of that somewhat confined citizen class of ancient Athens. There was, then, a very important representative element in Athenian democracy. That should come as no surprise to people who know about other aspects of ancient Athenian life. Indeed, a *habit of representation* can often be detected within that society.

Let me give a few examples. If you had the equivalent of our green card, if you were an alien legally resident in Attica, how would you participate, how would you protect yourself, how would you use the legal system? You would need a *prostates*, a protector, not a lawyer, not a hired professional, but some Athenian citizen with whom you have had a good relationship, who would look after your interests. He was, in effect, your representative in the Athenian legal and political system.

If you were a foreign power, Thebes, for example, and you wanted to observe and influence the way the Athenian political system was acting, you didn't have a high-paid ambassador sitting up on Massachusetts Avenue somewhere. Rather you found a sympathetically-minded Athenian citizen. Thebes in the fourth century found Demosthenes as their citizen representative, a *proxenos* within that city. Or imagine yourself a member of a religious group, one that venerates a particular divinity in classical Athens. Veneration will probably involve animal sacrifice and that has to be done properly. It has to be done in public with the horror of the killing recognized and made tolerable through ritual. This does not, however, require a professional priest, in our sense, someone whose livelihood derives primarily from his performance of ritual. Instead, one member of the group, probably rich, probably well-born, carries out this ritual for the rest of the group.

In each case, it is not a professional or employee, but a friend, patron or colleague who looks after the interests of other people

within that society, who serves as a kind of representative for them. This habit of representation, in other words, helps explain something very basic in Greek thinking about politics. It is the assumption that, under certain circumstances, one person can speak for and act for the interests of others with whom he, and it almost always is a he, is closely connected. Extend this principle into the political realm, and it helps explain why an ostensibly democratic system could exclude so many members of the society.

This principle also helps illuminate some of the ancient texts about democracy that might otherwise seem puzzling. Take, for example, Aristotle's *Politics*. Start reading that work and you may be puzzled that the building block Aristotle uses is not the individual. He does not use atomistic individualism upon which so much of contemporary political theory has been built. His building block is rather the smallest discrete unit that he can identify. In ancient Greek terms, that is the *oikos*, the household. But it is the household extended through time back to its ancestors and toward to future descendants. It is extended in membership as well, including not only the adult male head of the household but wife, children, maiden aunts, aged uncles, grandparents, and even one set of slaves, the *oiketai*, or household servants. All these are part of the *oikos*. Aristotle builds his theory of politics on groups rather than on individuals. These include the extended household and the neighborhood and larger units as well.

If one approaches politics through groups and their needs rather than through individuals and their rights, then one naturally concentrates on the role of these units rather than on the inclusion of each individual. This, I believe, is exactly what happened in ancient Athens. A system of tacit representation operated in at least two ways. One I have already suggested to you: geographical representation, and it applies particularly to the way the Council operates. We have seen the difficulty of the poor farmer in Marathon who would like, perhaps, to participate in politics in Athens but finds the expenditure of time and energy difficult, particularly in crucial periods of the agricultural year. There is some counterweight provided by the fact that participation in the Athenian Council eventually was compensated, and, understandably, pay for that Council was introduced earlier than pay for service in the Assembly. The membership of the Council was worked out to insure that in each of those ten parts of the year, among each of those fifty Presiders, one had representatives from the area immediately around the city of Athens itself, and from the coastal areas of Attica and from the upland and highland areas as

well. It looks to me as if, in designing that system, the Athenians were thinking of their past history of regional division, and of strife between different regions of Attica. They achieved a geographical accommodation that worked, through balanced representation on the Athenian Council.

Let me now skate out onto very thin ice and make another suggestion. I believe that there is also a kind of tacit representation by gender in classical Athens. Imagine an Athenian male en route to the Assembly. You stop him and you question him saying, "Your political system is not a democracy. By excluding women you have excluded fifty-one percent of the human race, not to mention your exclusion of slaves, resident aliens and others. This is a highly chauvinistic organization, incompatible with a truly democratic society."

What kind of answer would you imagine coming back from that person? Something like this, "Look, I am not here for myself. I'd rather be out hunting. I'd rather be working out at the gymnasium. I'd rather be tending to my farm. I am here to look after the interests of the *polis*. I am here to look after the interests of my deme, my region within Attica, and certainly the interests of the *oikos*. That includes the women, the children, as well as the ancestors and all who are included in the *oikos*." We would say, "That is an exceedingly paternalistic answer." But you didn't ask me to talk about paternalism in Athenian Democracy. You just asked me to talk about representative democracy.

I think Athenian men of that period would feel that in some sense they were representing, when they went to the Council or the Assembly, the interests and concerns of their entire household. It is easy for us today to see through that attitude, to recognize how fallacious, how pernicious it can be. But it was surely more difficult for them, given the radically different context in which they were living.

The effectiveness of that representation of course would depend on the degree of exchange that took place within the household, between male and female, the older and the younger people, among all the constituent groups within it. Certainly in recent years the dominant picture of the place of women in the Athenian *oikos* has been one of individuals kept constantly within the dank and dark recesses of the house. They were given the role of bearing children, of tending to them, of spinning wool, and they were expected to be submissive, quiet, living in what used to be called "oriental seclusion."

Some of us have a problem with accepting that view without qualification, though there is certainly some evidence in support of it.

One of my problems in accepting it is that it diverges so sharply from the picture of women in ancient Greek drama. I think particularly of a wonderful day in the Theatre of Herodes Atticus some years ago. I am afraid I have forgotten the name of the magnificent actress and the not so magnificent male lead in a performance by Euripides' *Ion*. Those of you who know the play realize that through much of the play Creusa and Ion fail to realize that they are mother and child separated by unfortunate circumstances. Indeed, the mother at one point tries to poison her child. Then there comes the moment when the tokens are brought forth and recognition follows. In this wonderful performance, the actors are at opposite ends of the stage, they rush towards each other and Creusa looks at her son and he looks at her. He says, "*metera mou*" (my mother) and she says, "*paidi mou*" (my child) and almost picks him up while holding him in her powerful embrace.

No one should jump to quick conclusions about Athenian society from the scenes in tragic drama. But the difference between the way women are depicted on the Greek stage and the way they are represented in much recent scholarly writing does make one wonder about what their situation really was. This question arises not just from a few of the most famous dramas where powerful women such as Clytemnestra and Medea dominate the stage, but from other plays as well. Think, for example, of Euripides' *The Suppliants*.

Here the suppliant mothers of the Seven against Thebes ask Athens to restore their sons' bodies. We know what Athens is supposed to do. The myth tells us that the Athenians went out and restored the bodies and gave them a decent burial. In the play, however, King Theseus' initial reaction is: Did the Seven handle it right? Didn't they botch it up? Why should we get involved? What is it to us? Theseus' mother, Aethra, turns to him and says, "May I speak, child, for the city's good and for yours?"

Theseus says, "Many wise things are said, even by women." "I shrink," she says, "from showing what I have in mind." "It is shameful," he says, "to hold back words that might help your kin." "Well, I will not now be still and afterward blame myself for silence wrongly kept, or fear that women's well-meant words are wasted and in that dread let my good will be lost. My child, I bid you first look to the gods, for if you slight them you will fail. Intentions otherwise good can be wrecked by that one fault. I ask you also to think what will be said of you if you fail to come to their assistance. It will be said that, lacking manly strength, you stepped aside in fear when you had a chance to win a crown of glory for the city, that you chose to hunt

wild boars, a trivial pursuit, and when it was time to take up helmet and spear and drive the task through—then you proved a coward.”

“Mother,” says Theseus, “I also see the truth of what you have said. That is not in keeping with my ways. I am unable to decline this task. What then will hostile people say of me if you, my parent who fear for me, must urge me first to undertake this labor? I will undertake it. I will try first by persuasion and if that does not succeed, then force of arms will gain my end.”

Here the female speaker is not one of the grand tragic heroines, a Mycenaean queen like Clytemnestra or a barbarian like Medea, but an Athenian mother, firmly but diplomatically reminding her son what is expected of him. Here, I believe, we are closer to the life of a fifth-century Athenian family, where women, despite imposed limitations that we would consider reprehensible, find ways to speak out on matters of civic concern. We see something similar in other dramas, both tragic and comic. But we also feel something similar in the historical record. Once in a while the curtain lifts and we get a glimpse of the way women acted within that society. Take, for example, the sister of Cimon, one of the great politicians of the fifth century BC. Elpinice, we are told in Plutarch’s life of Pericles, came to Pericles to intervene on behalf of Cimon, who had been ostracized. The possibility arose of calling him back to Athens. The decree for his return, we are told, was not drafted by Pericles until a secret compact had been made between them through the intervention of Elpinice, to the effect that Cimon should sail out with a fleet of two hundred ships and have command in foreign parts attempting to subdue the territory of the King of Persia, while Pericles should have the dominant voice in the city itself. One might challenge the historicity of the details but the story depends on the notion that certain women could do that kind of negotiating between factions and do it very skillfully and successfully.

My inference from this is that the ideology of passive, quiet, subdued women is not the whole story. The reality was rather different and Athenian women in many cases were actually articulate and could be outspoken, particularly to their husbands, when they felt their husbands were mistaken on crucial matters.

We would love to know what dialogues took place within the privacy of the Athenian household. What was it like when our imaginary Athenian, whom we have just been questioning on the way to the Assembly, came home from the meeting. Did his wife say nothing at all? Or did she say, “Did you have a nice day, dear?” Or did she say, “I hope you voted right on such and such an issue. Tell me what

happened.”

I suppose we will never know, but we do have—once again through the agency of Aristophanes—a little glimpse into one of those scenes. It comes, of course, in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*. *Lysistrata*, as you recollect, has a more effective strategy for ending the war than does Dicaeopolis, whom we saw in the *Acharnians*. The mechanism *Lysistrata* uses is, of course, the sex strike, which reduces the men on stage to total disintegration, even though they still insist for a long time that they know perfectly well what should be done and what is the best for the city.

Lysistrata at one point turns to the males and describes what it is like to be a woman, what it is like to feel the loss that comes through aging, but also the loss that comes about when you see war ripping society apart, ripping your household apart and killing your children. She says the time has come to point out that we women have some perspective on this, a perspective that is more compelling than that of the men. She says that with eloquence, with that alternation that you noticed perhaps in the *Acharnians*, between ribald humor and deep passionate concern for what is happening to Athens.

Let me try to sum up. What have we seen and what might we take from this brief look at Athenian representative and participatory democracy as we move further into this colloquium? There are, perhaps, three things that emerge. First, we are left, I feel, without the old cliché that those Athenians had direct democracy. It is not accidental that there were certain representative elements in Athenian democracy. Indeed, in my view, any democracy must have some form of representation, careful representation, if it is larger than face-to-face society where individuals can sit down and work everything out around a table.

Second, we found ourselves needing to focus on how effectively both participatory and direct democratic elements worked within classical Athens. The honest answer is that there were problems on both fronts. We have heard a lot, particularly from the political right, about the problems of direct democracy, about demagogues and the dangers that come about when an Assembly runs off on one tangent without having fully thought through its implication. This criticism is often combined with rhetoric suggesting that direct democracy was responsible for “the fall of Athens,” a judgment that, at best, would require much qualification and nuance. To be sure, there were problems with direct democracy in Athens. But there were also problems in the representative elements in Athenian democracy. Representation depended on the assumption that the individual understood and

could reflect the views of other groups different in gender and in status with which he was closely connected. In recent years we have come to understand very clearly that the basic rule is: “Don’t assume.” Just because you are close to someone, don’t assume you understand what that person’s feelings, attitudes, needs and political responses are. We are aware of that now, more sharply than the Athenians were, but we must also understand why the Athenians might use that assumption in constructing a political system.

Third, and perhaps most critical, we have to recognize the importance of the proper formulation and presentation of questions in any form of political decision-making. We have seen that in the indications that Council was quite crucial in the functioning of Athenian democracy. But let me remind you also of the importance of this point in our own society. Many of you will recollect that, some months ago, one of the major polling organizations in the United States asked two representative samples of citizens what they thought about the first lady. In one case they asked, “What do you think about Hillary Clinton: excellent job, bad job, etc.?” In the second case they asked, “What do you think of Hillary *Rodham* Clinton?” The only difference in the question was that one word, “Rodham.” The responses, however, were very different. The negative reactions were vastly higher when they injected the word “Rodham.”

The formulation of the question, in other words, shaped the response. It led to the reaction, “We know what *she* is, a radical feminist going around putting her maiden name on the towels and her stamp on the public policy.” That episode makes me conclude that we should watch the advocates of electronic democracy very carefully and be prepared to use against them Dicaeopolis’ strategy. If the wizards that tell us that electronic democracy is the way to achieve truly participatory democracy — we just let somebody formulate the question for us and then we punch in “yes” or “no” — I am going to stand up like Dicaeopolis and heckle and hoot and holler — to remind people that the formulation of the question in any democracy is absolutely crucial.

Thank you very much.

- * This translation of Aristophanes’ “*The Acharnians*” is adapted from Douglass Parker’s version in The University of Michigan Press series. ☛

Questions and Answers to Dr. Robert Conner

Q: What about the officials of the state, how were they chosen?

C: These people were chosen by lot from a pre-selected group. Every year a different group of archons would be chosen. Of course one of the most puzzling features of Athenian democracy is the great reliance on lot in the selection of officials. To our puzzlement a good Athenian democrat might say, "If you use election, which is the only feasible alternative, you greatly privilege those people who have wealth and prominence, particularly those who lead aristocratic or semi-aristocratic cult groups."

Those were the people who had, in effect, "exposure." So if you used election you would be very likely to empower the equivalent of Texas billionaires. In their view it was better to reach much more broadly within the society. That is where lot came in more prominently for them.

Q: Where was the chicken and where was the egg? What caused the process to start in the first place?

C: For the start of the process of establishing democracy we will have to move back to the sixth century and ask an extremely important question, "Why did the Athenians feel they had to change?" They made economic progress during the sixth century but they encountered terrible problems in the operation of the Pisistratid tyranny. Pisistratus came in as a man on a white horse, who would deal with certain problems, take them off your back so you wouldn't have to worry about them. After his death, generational change made the regime become more and more repressive. Behind that were deep rifts in Athenian society, one of them a geographical division that pitted one part of Attica against another part. Then just 2500 years ago, in Cleisthenes, Athens found a leader of real vision and insight, a person whose work we have been celebrating this past year or two. Cleisthenes saw that the alternative to having men on white horses was an involvement that would reach not just into the city of Athens but out into the countryside of Attica as well. It would bring people together from different geographical regions of Attica and would give them a say. That set of changes led over time to the fully developed Athenian democracy.

Q: Do you think modern democracies have overemphasized individual rights?

C: We are really talking about the legacy of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, a legacy that I believe has to be carefully correlated with our legacy from ancient Greece. They are intertwined in important ways. To oversimplify somewhat, one of the great changes brought about by the European Enlightenment was the effort to achieve universal human rights. Restating politics in those terms creates great upward possibilities and great downward possibilities as well. The upward possibilities are something that I think were never fully envisioned in classical antiquity. They are something we are still struggling to envision today. That involves an attempt to create out of our fractiousness, our divisiveness, a universal society, but one based on the consent and participation of citizens. I think that is not beyond dreaming and imagining and desiring. At the same time, the downsides have been, I think, very serious and have sometimes created great difficulties. I get a sense that you see the downsides very clearly. I think they are real. But it is important that we not lose sight of the possibility of a society in which human rights are the central challenge. That is part of the legacy of European enlightenment. It is part of the way they restated their understanding of what they had learned from the Greeks in a rather radically different way.

I say those things trying to come clean about my own social and political views. But as I speak I see in the audience other people who know much more about this than I do, particularly Garry Wills. We probably ought to move on. If somebody wants to raise the topic again, I will always be happy to talk about it.

Thank you very much. 🍷

Democracy and Imperialism

Dr. Gary Wills

Ranged alongside other important empires in history, the imperial sway of Athens looks like small potatoes. Other empires girdled the earth and lasted for centuries. The Persian, Macedonian, Roman, and Turkish Empires spanned continents. The later Spanish, English and French Empires spanned oceans. The Athenian Empire, it is true, did extend to four hundred or so city states, but most of them were small polities, on the islands or along the shore of the Aegean Sea. The Empire lasted less than three-quarters of the fifth century. It never included all of Hellas itself—in that sense it was smaller than the Hellenic League that had opposed the Persians in 490 and 480 B.C., and out of which it grew.

So, what makes this empire interesting? Well, undoubtedly the fact that it was the *Athenian* Empire. It was described by Thucydides. In fact, most of our confusions about the Empire, as well as our interest in it, have some root in that artist's puzzling work. Athens, whose thinkers posed so many moral questions for a later time, seems the wrong city to wield empire, to quash the liberties of those fellow Hellenes they were pledged to defend. The Athenian Empire intrigues us, as do Athenian slaves and Athenian women. How can the city that boasted of freedom have been, in some areas at least, the enemy of freedom?

The moral blind spots of our neighbors are always a mystery to us. We think, "How can they continue to act so shamefully when it is obvious to everybody?" And the mystery grows when we look back at other countries and other ages. How can some ancient people have been so blithe about practices like exposing unwanted children? So, in the matter of slavery, it is less that the Athenians practiced it than that they practiced it with such equanimity. Pericles shows no sign of feeling the moral imperative to free his slaves that George Washington experienced. Socrates does not, like his fellow slave-holder, Thomas Jefferson, tremble at the thought of divine justice when he looks at enslaved peoples.

But moral sentiment can cause as much surprise as moral obliquity. The Athenians, so tranquil about their slaves, displayed an astonishing uneasiness about their Empire. Winston Churchill did not say in public that the British Empire was tyrannical, that it had enslaved

its colonies. But Thucydides shows us Athenians, including Pericles, saying just that—regularly indicting themselves. At the beginning of World War II, George Orwell said that he cringed at the rhetoric that said a fight for France and England was a fight for democracy. Those two countries, he pointed out, held 600 million dis-enfranchised human beings around the world—including India, more populous than all of Europe’s so-called democratic powers. Now, we cannot imagine Churchill standing up, especially in the middle of World War II, to say what Pericles did during the Peloponnesian War (according to Thucydides). Here are his words: “You must prop up your reputation as a great power, a thing you have made your boast—not shirking the effort while sharing the credit. Do not suppose this struggle is simply over slavery or freedom—the Empire could be lost, with the train of perils it has brought you from your subjects’ hatred. You cannot simply walk away from power as if, flinching in the crisis, you might choose this moment to indulge a noble indifference. You have made the Empire a quasi-tyranny—a thing wrong, perhaps, to have taken, but deadly to give up. The indifferent are those who bring down cities, either spreading their attitude to others or withdrawing from society to hold it in isolation. For indifference is only safe where others are prepared to act. It does not serve a ruling city, though it helps keep ruled ones safe in their submission.”

That astonishing speech, following the more famous Funeral Oration in Book Two on *The History*, goes some way to cancelling what was said in the earlier text. There, he said that Athens indulges wide liberty of thought and action—only to say, in this speech, that such freedom is too dangerous to be indulged when the Empire is at stake. Pericles takes words ordinarily used in praise—“indifference,” “nobility,” “autonomy”—and condemns them, saying they are the ruin of imperial cities. Martin Ostwald even compared the attitude expressed here toward independent thinking with Creon’s condemnation of Antigone in the play by Sophocles. Nor is Thucydides voicing only some spasm of awareness that the Empire is a dangerous acquisition. He not only puts that charge in other mouths than that of Pericles; he vindicates it in the description of imperial action, like the slaughter of fellow Greeks at Skione or Melos.

Some modern scholars, the very ones that tell us that Athenians were harsh on their slaves, suggest that they were too tender-minded about their Empire. G.E.M. de St. Croix says in effect: “Here, here, Thucydides, buck up. The Empire was really not that bad.” It is an odd position for a Marxist to be taking. He goes so far as to claim that the Athenian Empire was the only good empire in all of history.

He relies for his main argument on that odd pamphleteer, nicknamed, by Gilbert Murray, the Old Oligarch. We heard about him last night. Our modern radical takes hands with this supposedly aristocratic author to say that the Empire helped create democracy at home and spread democracy in dependent cities. Here is the heart of the reasoning put forth by the Old Oligarch: "The poor in that place [sometimes he is in that place, Athens, sometimes he is not], the common people, have a right to more than the well-born, the rich, since they man the ships that make the city powerful." And here is his argument on democracy abroad: "Whenever subject cities are internally divided, the Athenians side with the lower class."

Whatever mysterious game this writer was up to, his views have proved attractive to many people besides de St. Croix. They fit very conveniently, for instance, what was the standard view of Aristophanes's plays, that the dramatist was pitting an old farmer class of Hoplite warriors on land against the poor rowers of the fleet and judicial panels on the city tribunals.

It makes a neat picture. The once-powerful had to give up power, had to extend democracy, in order to keep the fleet and the courts loyal. Then the fleet and the courts sided with the under-class in dependent cities, spreading democracy throughout the Empire, making everything work together to the good.

But this scheme was essentially a joke in Aristophanes, and a very strange thing in The Old Oligarch, whom many people now consider a young smart aleck, a sophist. In fact, W.G. Forrest used four words to drive him into the ground. He said he was an "excited, immature, undergraduate essayist." Whatever the truth in that, The Oligarch is probably not our best source on what was happening in Athens.

It is a mistake, probably, to split Athens, that warrior state, into a high-born Hoplite army and a low-born navy. The two were far more integrated than that simple division would indicate. We have to remember that the *strategos*, usually translated "general", was also an "admiral," disposing of *navarchoi* just as he did of *hipparchoi*. And warriors of the Hoplite class did not just fight on land. They got on the ships and went off in large numbers together with peltasts and archers and siege experts. Otherwise what would the navy do when it landed to put down opposition? On board, the Hoplites had a bond with their lower-class oarsmen friends. Both groups are citizens, as opposed to the growing numbers of resident aliens, allied mercenaries, and slaves who were also rowers on the ships.

The citizens on board had, in other words, a reason to make

common front against non-citizens, somewhat like that which the poor whites and the rich whites of the Old South made against black slaves. And since shipboard and Hoplite warriors shared the same *deme* in many cases—probably triararchs, recruited heavily from their own *demes*—the shipboard citizens had religious ties binding them together, things that cut across class lines but excluded the non-citizens either on the ship or in the battlefield. Russel Meiggs, W.K. Pritchard, and Borimar Jordan have pointed out how important were religious bonds within the military, a thing Thucydides largely neglects. So, it is probably a mistake to say that there was a simple division between citizens in the army and the navy.

How about the picture abroad? Were cities neatly split into oligarchies and democracies? It is hard enough to re-create the class situation in Athens, where our information is fullest. It is impossible to do that, city by city around the Empire. The cities had different histories and social structures and ruling types, with complex relations among themselves, with Athens, and with third parties (Persia, Sparta, and independent cities, etc.). Our ignorance of all those factors cannot be filled in by a few references like the fact that the Melians did not let the populace hear what the Athenians were saying when they delivered their ultimatum. So, there is no reason to assume that all the cities had a uniform structure that corresponded exactly with the partly mythical division of Athens into two quite clear and separate types. In fact, Josiah Ober has argued that class solidarity and stability is the astonishing thing in the history of Athens, not division and conflict. That is what made it safe for Aristophanes to joke about the differences, both real and made up.

The upper-class army was not essentially opposed to empire as Moses Findley has pointed out. In fact, one of the basic facts about the Empire was that wealthy Athenians owned land throughout it. We find that from the history of the 'images', desecration before the Sicilian expedition: the upper-class people who were involved in it had their land taken away from them as part of their penalty, and it was land not in Attica, but elsewhere in the Empire. So, it is wrong to think that only the fleet had a stake in the Empire. We should remember, also, that when Pericles called the land forces into the city and had them abandon the countryside, the fleet was off fighting. So, much of the lower class was not even present to vote on imperial policy, yet there was continuity all through that time. If the supposedly great division existed as in Aristophanes, the Hoplite class could have taken over at that point.

So, modern discussion of the Athenian Empire has, perhaps,

posed a series of moral questions that are not what, at first, should come to mind. What we normally used to hear being asked was first, to what extent was membership voluntary in the Athenian League at the outset? (The Delian League, by the way, is a modern term and Athens was in charge from the very beginning.) Then, how soon was membership compelled? Then, how far did Athenians go in enslaving the subjects and coarsening their own character in the process?

The answer to those questions used to be quite easy. The League was voluntary at the outset; but with the compelled retention of some cities, and compelled admission of others, it became compulsory in principle. Then the principle of compulsion was put into increasing practice, as the dependent states became more and more restive or rebellious after the Persian threat had receded.

In other words, for a long time scholars read Thucydides as if he were Lord Aciton in a *chiton*, telling us that "power corrupts," the apparent point of the ultimatum to Melos. All parts of that conventional picture have been challenged. Ernst Badian, for instance, questions the benign arrangements at the beginning of the story, arguing that Athens used trickery and force to push Sparta away. St. Croix, P.A. Brunt and others questioned the end of the story, arguing that things were not so bad later on and that even the Melian slaughter is partly excusable in context. Moses Findley, however, thinks that the whole moral scheme of a good league turning into a bad empire is probably anachronistic in its categories. He quotes H.G. Myers as saying, "The League was from the moment of its creation an Athenian instrument of compulsion." And Findley adds that Athenian imperialism employed all the forms of material exploitation that were available and possible at any point. If it became more harsh later, it was because that was an option that was available and necessary.

So, discussion of the Empire has been subtly skewed by putting it into our moral categories and by emphasizing things like the fear of the people who submitted to Athens at the beginning as if nothing could have formed the League except *their* fear. Badian tells us that Athenians were exploiting that fear. He understates the degree to which the Athenians shared it. After all, that was the Athenians' controlling motive too. The Ionian cities had been dependent on Persia before and they might be again. But the shock to Athens had been immensely disorienting when the Persians twice sailed up to besiege their town, unsuccessfully (but just barely) in 490 and successfully in 480. Athens had needed Spartan help to resist in both cases; but that could not always be relied on, for a number of reasons, some of them religious. In that sense, Badian is right that Athens did want to

exclude Sparta from the outset. It wanted to be “Persia-proof.” It wanted to be able to stand, not on its own, because that was impossible, but without Sparta, which meant it would have to stand with the money and manpower and material that could be mustered from other seagoing parts of Hellas.

Athens could not do it on its own for many reasons. Take just one crude measure. The fleet, as it got into operation, sailing annually, took twenty thousand oarsmen. That is almost half of the male adult population of Athens. The city could not regularly meet that demand on its own. Construction and maintenance of the fleet was beyond Athenian resources. Their city had been destroyed two years before. And the fleet being built with tremendous urgency, would be ineffective if strategically located cities could deny it anchorage. Greek fleets did not stay at sea like modern ones. They had to put in.

So Aegina had to be forced into membership into the League. That reflects no change in policy but the working out of the implications in the first policy. In order to be safe herself, Athens needed help. In order to get that help, it had to promise safety to others. Once that deal was struck, nothing could be allowed to stand in the way of it.

As the Persian threat faded (though it never entirely disappeared), the primacy of Athens was enough to maintain itself by sheer inertia, if nothing else. But it also brought advantages to others, to the landed in Athens as well as the lower-class, to merchants all around the Empire, to many of the dependencies. Undoubtedly, in degrees impossible to gauge, year by year, city by city, some cities grew resentful of their subordination to Athens. Thucydides seems to make the Athenians gratuitously coarse in responding to that resentment. He has them say, in effect, “So what? Resent all you like. We are in charge and those in charge never step down.” That is the gist of the Melian dialogue culminating in this statement: “Better your hostility to us than your amity, if the amity suggests weak compliance on our part and the hatred signals to others in our sway that we can compel you.” This is a power calculation, not a moral discussion. Findley rightly points out that there is little just war theory among the ancient Greeks. War was a natural state with them. Socrates did not ask if he has fighting in a just war the four times he went out to fight for the Empire. But, even as a calculus of power, the Athenian stand at Melos is wrong—worse than a crime, an error.

The danger to the Empire arose from the subjects’ hatred, something that Thucydides dwells on over and over. Pericles made that point in the speech I began by quoting. Machiavelli would later emphasize that a prince must do everything possible to contrive that

he not be hated by his subjects. If he is, then his fall is just a matter of time. Even amorality has its rules, and this is the overriding one. Thucydides, as so often, said it first. We know that the Athenian who speaks at Melos is in trouble himself when he claims he prefers his subjects' hatred to their amity. Josiah Ober, in his *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, argues that the extraordinary internal cohesion of Athens came from the artful discipline the elite put itself under, to prevent its separation from the masses. There was continual re-integration of the leaders into the followers, by tact, and codes of deference, and overlapping structural devices (largely religious). There is every reason to feel that people who are that good at that kind of leadership at home must have tried to exercise it abroad. Meiggs traces the ways religious rites of the Empire were used in this effort, especially with the Ionian cities that considered themselves colonies of the mother city in Athens.

Of course that effort was hard to maintain over a long time, under pressures of the sort that the Peloponnesian War exerted. The pretense of League solidarity wore thinner and thinner. Can we then say that a progressive hardening of the Athenians in power, a coarsening of the internal democracy, followed from this?

That is a view sketchily lined in Thucydides and heavily crayolaed in Aristophanes. The benign League turned into a maligned empire when demagogues like Cleon succeeded to the moderate Pericles. Cleon had to cram the maw of the populace by mulcting the Empire. This picture, too, has suffered from modern attack. The continuity of policy and its support by the main body of Athenians, not just the common people, shows that democracy, not demagoguery, was in practice after as well as before the death of Pericles.

Then why does Pericles seem to give us a picture, at least partly in accord with that of Aristophanes, of some falling off from a purer democracy to a coarser one? Well, one might ask how Arthur Schlesinger could have agreed with Barbara Garson, author of the satirical play, *MacBird*, on the sudden descent from John Kennedy's shining statesmanship to Lyndon Johnson's vulgarity and coarse posturing before the populace.

Those of us who lived through the death of Kennedy, which seemed the loss of Camelot, can recognize the disgust some felt for his successors, something of what Thucydides suggests in the crude Cleon following on the death of the refined Pericles. But, did that succession really signal a change in the whole character of Greek democracy? Had the city fallen into the hands of people who pandered to the poor out of their own debased tastes? That is hard to

prove, even for Thucydides. After all, some of the worst afflictions came to Athens not from Cleon, the merchant of hides, but from Alcibiades, the aristocratic horse breeder.

In the same way, the essential nature of American democracy was not altered by the transition from Kennedy to Johnson. Admirers of the former have tried to create policy differences with the latter, saying for instance, that Kennedy would not have let the war in Vietnam develop as it did. But they seem to have little evidence but wishful thinking. Continuity of policy abroad and at home was the goal of Johnson, and his advisers on Viet Nam were precisely the men Kennedy had put most trust in during the last months of his life.

In the same way, I think, Thucydides looks back at the end of the war and tries to say that Pericles would not have let things go as badly as they did. Badian, who treats Thucydides as just an apologist for Pericles, calls all of his history one exercise in "disinformation," a term he uses constantly.

That is clearly wrong. Thucydides himself shows us a Pericles feeling trapped by the Empire, a thing deadly to surrender because of the cumulating hatreds within it. But the imperial outcome was not the result of a deep change in the nature of Athenian policy toward the subject states. Thucydides, the realist, says that the Peloponnesian War was caused when Athens became too powerful for Sparta's comfort. He is also saying, later in the book, I think, though only by implication, that the Empire collapsed when Athens became too powerful for its subjects' comfort. Power does not so much corrupt as topple of its own eventual weight.

So, going back to my opening questions, perhaps the difference between Athenian attitudes toward slavery and toward Empire is not so great as we think. We find the Athenians callous about slaves yet doubtful about Empire. That may simply be because the slave system seemed to work. With minor exceptions, there were no effective slave rebellions in Athens on the scale that there were in Rome. But the Empire was ceasing to work by the time Thucydides observed its later stages. That is why it becomes a matter for concern and speculation. The squeaky wheel gets the oil. The social problem forces attention on those who are experiencing it.

Thucydides approached the working of Empire as Aristotle would ask how drama works. What makes a tragedy fail with its audience? Failure to elicit the proper emotions, fear and pity, producing boredom. What makes an empire fail with its subjects? Failure to achieve complicity and satisfaction, producing hatred. This is a very Athenian

mode of thought and not at all what we could have expected from a Winston Churchill in World War II. Even when the Athenians failed at ruling others, they were astonishingly successful in analyzing the failure. 🐼

Answers to questions put to Dr. Gary Wills:

(Questions were inaudible)

GW: Slavery in the ancient world was a much more varied thing than in the modern. Slaves were war captives, of many different social classes. Many of them had been freemen before, and educated. There was a tremendous stratification between large masses of slaves working the silver mines, heavily policed, and slaves who went around doing business for their families.

Obviously a way was found to divide the slaves among themselves. It was hard for them to make a common front. Many were given privileges, different offices. One of the most amazing things to us, I suppose, is that slaves were made the policemen of Athens. They could go around and compel people to go to the Assembly. They could go around and “rope people in,” as in the translation of the *Acharnians* used this morning.

So, I imagine there was a good deal of thought given to how to pacify slaves, to render them less likely to combine against you. Which by the way, would indicate that, not only would the Athenians see the necessity of trying to avoid a united front of hatred against them in the Empire, but even with the slaves. That is an argument it seems to me we can make: that they would have gone about solving the problems of the Empire with that same kind of mentality.

GW: Many of the slaves were barbarians, but they were white. They did not have the tremendous burden of color. The historians of American slavery have pointed out that the color barrier is something that added a whole different dimension to slavery in America. No matter how seriously you take him, The Old Oligarch says that the interesting thing about Athenians is that you cannot tell them apart from their slaves. At least, you couldn't in Piraeus or places like that. We can always tell a black from a white. So, even if you freed a slave in the American South, the brand of color and the prejudice about that was still upon the freed slaves.

GW: Apparently the slaves outnumbered the free members of the community. Again, that is why they had to be isolated in various forms of servitude. I think that the slaves of the individual *oikos* probably were recruited into that in various ways, by religious rites among other things.

We have been using the drama a lot in this symposium. In the plays, Euripides especially, the slave nurse or pedagogue was a very important part of the household as a confidant and an educator of the young. Probably that does reflect some reality. It was such a splintered world, it would be very hard for slaves to form a united opposition to their position. Also, there was hope for various of them to be emancipated, and to be treated, even if not emancipated, with reasonable respect. Some could even travel abroad as agents for their masters and be trusted to handle their monies and come back—which would never have been attempted in the pre-Civil War South.

GW: I think there is an internal dynamic to an empire: the more you get, the more you need, not only as a psychological need but simply as a material fact. The bigger your fleet, the more supplies you have to have. Your grain supplies have to be certain. The more you control the commerce of the Aegean, the more necessary it is that all ports be open to you. There is a power feeding upon itself. It is not a conscious, probably imperial, design: "I am going to conquer the world, I am going to rule the world," etc. It is just that at each moment there is always a point at which you are saying that we do not have enough oarsmen, we have to conquer some more people and enslave people to row these triremes. We don't have enough access to trees to build our ships. We don't have enough fungibility in the empire, so we have to impose coinage decrees. Once this process starts, it seems to go on. That is what Gibbons said about the Roman Empire: there is a kind of internal necessity that an empire will go on expanding and expanding, creating a broader and broader periphery, a rim of empire which gets thinner and thinner and more easily penetrated. He also thought there is a kind of nemesis in empire itself, so that when it gets to a certain stage of bigness it will collapse. I think Paul Johnson was saying something like that, a little different in his *Decline of the Great Empires*. His argument was more that, in order to grow, not only do you have to take in a great deal of resources, manpower and that kind of thing, but you also continually create new markets out on the edge, and as those markets build up, they start drawing off from you. So, there are many ways to pose this, but it does seem to be that great empires, even though they can sustain themselves for a very long time, as the Roman Empire proves, probably have within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. I believe that is what Thucydides felt: no matter how well you treat these people, enough of them in time will hate you, and then you are done for.

GW: Should we really believe any of Thucydides' speeches? I tend to the view, and I think it is the general view, that the most polished parts of the work, including the two speeches of Pericles in *Book Two* and the *Melian Dialogue*, were written or revised quite late after he knew what had happened. There are a lot of internal echoes among those three texts. In effect, I think he is saying, "If Pericles didn't realize it, he should have; and since I think he is so bright, I will say that he did." That is a common way of thinking, by the way. Stanley Fish in his book on Milton enters Milton's mind and says all kinds of things that were in Milton's mind. If people objected to them he said, "Well, Milton was as bright as I am, and if I can think of it, certainly he would." I think there is a suspicion in Thucydides that anybody as bright as Pericles would know what I know, and I know now, at the end of the war, that the Empire was bound to fall. He says even more than I quoted. He says what Bernard Knox quoted last night: "The Empire may be destined to fall but even then our glory will be long." I think those are clearly written with the end in mind.

GW: Communication between the Empire and the central city....There was a tremendous flow back and forth of commerce and people into Athens from the Empire, and of people going out. There were the Prostates, who were discussed by Bob Connor. You always had to have those when you dealt with other people, and certain crimes that had been committed in the Empire had to be tried in Athens. So, merchants and politicians and fleet members all would be constantly trading information.

In that small little arena, the merchants and the military people and other travelers would keep things very up-to-date, except of course, in the winter season when the sailing was practically non-existent. Then there were long lapses in communication, though even then there was trade going on, it would have been a slowing; rather than an actual locking out of communication. Communication by sea is a lot faster, and you can actually signal across long spaces, which you often cannot do on land because of the mountainous nature of Greece. All kinds of signals were worked out. We know the famous signal system of lighting fires on mountain tops at the beginning of the *Agamemnon*. So a ship going to the islands and a ship going to Athens could signal back and forth to each other, or actually stop and communicate with each other.

GW: The question is: did Thucydides see the error of his ways and just give up? I don't know how many scholars you know who are willing to admit they have been dead wrong all along, but I have met damn few, if any. I think one problem with that is there does seem to be evidence that the history was a composition Thucydides was constantly reworking. Also, the text itself is ambiguous. I am giving one interpretation, one that glosses over internal contradictions. There is not a very simple view of that book, and if you were going to think you were wrong, you would almost have to have a simple view, a very clear position that was very clearly wrong. Actually, there are a lot of things in that book that can be developed in different ways. It seems to me the problem is not simply the incomplete sentence at the end, which could be an accident. The various degrees of finish throughout the manuscript show that he was constantly reworking it and changing things. The fact that the most polished parts seem to be the latest, seems to indicate that he was working hardest on it at the end, probably growing in confidence about his views. He probably thought it is all confirming. We see farther down the road that he did, but it is, of course, the common reaction of people in situations to say, "Oh, my God, the sky has fallen, this is the end of things." How many times do we read that the end of the Roman Empire has arrived? Augustine finds it, Jerome finds it, all these people find it. Of course it keeps on going most of the time, but they didn't know that. I think the same is true of Thucydides.

Thank you. 🍷

Democratic Disenfranchisement: Women, Metics and Slaves of Fifth Century Athens with Help from Aristophanes

Marianne McDonald

Athens is commonly thought to be the birthplace of democracy, and now it seems the Western world has corroborated their noble experiment. A “government by the people and for the people” engineered to give “the greatest good to the greatest number,” seems to have appealed philosophically to many, and notably to the Americans and French whose revolutions were inspired by the writings of such intellectuals as Rousseau, Voltaire, Locke and Hume. The Ur-ideal is to be traced to Athens, but there this political system was mistrusted by their great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, and if democracy is defined as a government offering equal rights to all people, it certainly never existed in the Athens of ancient times.

Athens had only a limited democracy. Suffrage was far from universal, restricted to the adult male citizens, and they were less than one quarter of the population. If we follow Strauss’ figures, adult males were slightly more than 40,000 before the Peloponnesian War, and after, tragically reduced to between 14,000 and 16,250.¹ Women, children, metics (resident aliens) and slaves made up the rest of the population, and the estimates of these vary enormously. If we follow Gomme, he claimed that the total population of Attica in 431 was 315,500.² This included other foreigners besides those who were formally called metics, namely visitors and residents with limited privileges.

An Athenian citizen had to have two citizen parents, following Pericles’ legislation of ca. 451/0; it is said that this was not always completely enforced. Full citizenship entailed political, religious and property rights. I shall now discuss some of the categories in which these rights were limited.

Metics were a free population of resident aliens with various rights. They needed to be sponsored by a citizen and be registered in that citizen’s *deme*. Subject to taxes and limited liturgies, they could not legally marry or own land unless some special grant (*enktesis*) had been made. In that case they could be financially independent and serve in the army.

A slave was a person and a piece of property. Slavery was limited to foreigners, a result of war and piracy. Slave traders had an active business. The numbers of slaves are hard to determine, but one speculates that they did not exceed 3:1, or three slaves to one free person. They were employed in many tasks from domestic work to commerce and banking. They were very important in mining. They also worked in agriculture in the large estates. The state could use slaves as police and clerks, and in minor bureaucratic positions. At times of crises they could be used in the military, though they were then freed first. Freedom was potentially possible for every slave, but occurred most frequently in domestic and governmental spheres, rather than in mining and agriculture.³ Slaves were necessary for the smooth functioning of the Athenian democracy. Xenophon proposed in his *Ways and Means* that all citizens should live off the funds derived from the silver mines worked by slaves so that they could function fully in their public life as citizens.

The increasing importance of slaves during and after the Peloponnesian War, when severe demands were made on the citizen manpower, is reflected in their growing role in Greek drama. Euripides had slaves make heroic statements, and the noble slave often contrasted with a base traditional hero (e.g., *Iphigenia at Aulis*, c.f. the peasant husband in *Electra*). Aristophanes showed many outspoken slaves in his plays, e.g. Xanthias in the *Frogs*, and this type led to the "clever slave" in New Comedy. Like women they were viewed as "tricky" and quick-witted, and could accomplish through their maneuvers many things that the male citizens could not.

Whereas women and children were citizens, they did not have voting rights, and only in special cases could women own property, but never in Athens. A woman was subject to her father (if she were unmarried), her husband (if married), male relatives and her son (if widowed). She had a male guardian throughout her life (*kurios*) who represented her interests; she could not proceed at law on her own, so technically she had no legal existence. She married young, often to someone twice her age (Xenophon, *Oikonomikos* VII-X). She was given little education. She was not allowed to conduct financial transactions over one *medimnos* of barley. She had a dowry, which she would return to her father if her marriage failed. If the father had no male heir, she became an *epikleros*, or heiress, and had to marry her nearest male relative on her father's side so that she could preserve the family fortune for the family. She was to produce legitimate heirs for her husband's *oikos*, or her father's, or both. She was thus merely a conduit for male property.

Foreign women, particularly like Aspasia, Pericles' mistress, were the ones who were educated. *Hetaerae* also shared this freedom, but were subject to a special tax (*Porneion Telos*). In general, the wife was confined to the house, except when religious or some social duties allowed her greater freedom. She was generally chaperoned by some male. She was respected as the manager of the house and mother of citizens, and the one who ensured the religious health of the community.⁴ Perhaps we can learn from Pseudo-Demosthenes' claim:

We have *hetairae* for our pleasures, concubines for the daily care of our bodies, and lawful wives for generating legitimate children and as reliable housekeepers.

(*Against Neaera* 59.118-22)

It seemed the lower the woman's class, the greater her freedom; in many ways slave women were freer than Greek matrons. Engels explained this by saying that the more closely the woman is associated with the production of male heirs for her husband's property, the more tightly she is locked up at home (the risk of her producing a bastard is too great).⁵

There are many qualitative estimates of a woman's life in Fifth Century Athens. There is the "angry" assessment given by Eva Keuls, in *The Reign of the Phallus* and at the other extreme, Mary Lefkowitz's view that a woman mainly needs marriage and motherhood, adding "Greek men may not have been so concerned with repressing women as protecting them."⁶

I take a position rather between the two. In this paper, I shall also concentrate on women, rather than metics and slaves, and try to look at some of the questions raised by Aristophanes when he chose to represent women in power in three of his plays: *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Ecclesiazusae*.⁷ Women in drama were represented in various ways that were foreshadowed by the Homeric dichotomy of woman as criminal, overstepping her sphere, and woman as model of virtue in her particular sphere: e.g., Clytemnestra earned ignominy for all women for all time by helping murder her husband vs. Penelope who earned glory by her faithful trust in her husband's return and by protecting her husband's property.

Many scholars have explicated the patriarchal structures of ancient Greek drama: it was written by males to enforce the male regime, and if we miss this message in the text, we should note that the roles were all played by men, and it is doubtful that women were even allowed in the theatre.⁸ Lauren K. Taaffe began her book on *Aristophanes and Women* with the citation of the following joke:

Question: How many feminists does it take to screw in a light-bulb?
 Answer: That's not funny. Her point is clear and well taken: many jokes were at the expense of women, and the women were not laughing. Winkler claimed that women laughed in private, although the situation was grim as far as public rights were concerned.⁹

Whereas I admit that much of the critical work is outstanding, I still maintain that some of it underemphasizes the vital role that women play in their traditional roles of giving birth, raising children, and ensuring a safe passage for the dead to the next world through the rituals that they perform. One might say that political and economic power is virtually insignificant by comparison with their power over generation, life, and death. Of course, I would never claim that these familial functions were adequate recompense for political and economic deprivation.¹⁰

This look at the status of women may give us more perspective on our present position. In an article from *Time* (Feb. 14, 1994) by Lance Morrow, "Men: Are they Really that Bad?" this claim is made by Allan Carlson, president of the Rockford Institute: "We are at the tail end of the deconstruction of patriarchy, which has been going on since the turn of the century. The last acceptable villain is the prototypical white male." Classicists and feminists have transferred some of this same ire towards the ancient Greek male.¹¹ I think that by denigrating the male role, because it has limited the power of women, some of the latter's power has also been underestimated. Ironically these feminists in their own way sometimes play a role similar to the men they are vilifying by adopting the masculine value system, but on the whole they have isolated a kernel of present day gender conflicts by revealing the lie of Athenian democracy - and they are to be praised for this.

Many have noted that women in Greek drama are powerful figures and do things that they rarely could do in their usual life.¹² There are many speculations about this. Did drama express male fears of women in power? Did the men think that if they acted out their nightmares on stage, they would not take place in real life? Did some men simply enjoy dressing up like women? Did they like to play women because they could express feelings that they usually could not express in their usual male public roles? Did women themselves shape the poets' psyche so that they would express their deepest feelings of betrayal in a patriarchal society? Was tragedy intended to critique or preserve? To change or maintain? I believe that most of these questions can be answered in favor of both change and preservation, and that tragedy and comedy were both as innovative and subversive

as they were conservative.¹³

These plays were displayed at important festivals, particularly at the Greater Dionysia where one of the main aims was impressing the allies with the power of Athens. This was a political and religious festival. Tragedy and Comedy were probably meant to contribute (like Carnival and other licentious celebrations) toward maintaining a status quo, a catharsis of political fear, to extend Aristotle's formulation.¹⁴ Comedy used laughter to obtain a similar catharsis. This catharsis was necessary for the continued health of the *polis*. Yet at the same time as tragedy and comedy were conceived as important social releases (the Saturnalian effect), letting off the steam of dissension, they were subversive in articulating the problems. This was particularly true of the works of Euripides and Aristophanes. It could also account for Euripides' unpopularity during his own lifetime; he won only four victories. Aristophanes had to alter his form of criticism, so that by the end of his life he was writing bland comedies like the *Plutus*, which did not attack specific people, and dealt with fantasy rather than specific political problems. It is possible to read some criticism into his new use of symbolism, but one has to search. Aristophanes wrote many lines criticizing Euripides, but it is obvious that he admired him, and saw their critical overlap. We remember that wonderful word, *Euripidaristophanizein*, used by Cratinus in a humorous way probably to describe the scathing attacks both these authors could launch. It is amusing but understandable that one spent so much time attacking the other, since their writing shared so much common ground.

Aeschylus and Sophocles infrequently focused on women, and when they did, they showed them violating the rules of a stable masculine world. These violations differed: Clytemnestra's murder of her husband was a crime with few redeeming features, but Antigone's burying of her brother contained an obvious social corrective. It took Euripides and Aristophanes, however, to show women as clear heroines, in many ways superior to the men they confronted. And the heroines' power comes from their certainty that they are doing what is right for the city, not for themselves. These four great playwrights oppose women's humanity and spirituality - their espousal of universal values - to men's childish aggression and unprincipled egoism. One need only contrast the male heroes in Greek drama who are never ashamed to admit they seek only their own glory, like Ajax, vs. the female heroes who have other agendas. Even Clytemnestra claims to be avenging her daughter.

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is the first play that I shall use to investi-

gate the idea of women in power. It took Aristophanes until 411 B.C. to make a woman the heroine of one of his plays. Euripides' *Helen* was performed the year before, and that plot figures prominently in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, also done that year. It is likely that the *Lysistrata* was probably performed at the Lenaea, and *Thesmophoriazusae* shortly after at the Greater Dionysia. This was after the Sicilian disaster, and the Athenians were weary of war and ready for alternative solutions. It took these dire circumstances to allow Aristophanes' daring speculation that women could bring about political change.

The *Lysistrata* shows women taking over the Acropolis, and by means of a sex strike, forcing men to make peace. They use women's weapons and women's language; even their role in religious ritual adds to humorous situations, such as the proboulos being decked out as a corpse by *Lysistrata*. The dramatic imagery and devices let us understand more about what women did and how they functioned in this Democracy.

Lysistrata begins by saying that if the women she had summoned were invited to a festival, there would have been a crowd. We know about the festivals that occur throughout the year, the Skira in the spring, the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Adonia in the summer, the Thesmophoria in the fall and Haloa in the winter. It is obvious that these rituals are meant to enhance fertility, and to mourn its absence.¹⁵ Human life from birth to death is celebrated in these yearly rituals. In this play, women are said to begin from their youth to take part in rituals (638-48).

The women complain about their daily life at home, catering to their men, managing their slaves, and caring for their children, but they finally show up (Lys. 15-19). We learn many details about their life: Spartan women exercise (witness Lampito's muscles: *Lysistrata* claims she could throttle a bull, 80-82). Women depilate, whereas men are distinguished by their hairiness (89, 151 et al).

The oath is sworn by means of a "sacrifice" of wine. Various comments refer to the bibulousness of women, besides their strong erotic drives (e.g., 201, and 403 ff). This is an obvious comic ploy, but when political power is limited, one can understand both as viable substitutes. America's Congress seems to combine them *with* political power.

The old men repeat misogynist claims as they try to burn the women out of the Acropolis. Their act is characterized as illegal shameless daring (*tolmema*). The women also call the men wicked,

and remind us of their aim of saving Greece from war and madness (342). The women bring water and put out the men's fire, and prevent the men, who have brought logs as ramming poles, from forcing their entry into what is now *their* Acropolis, covering both Freudian and political bases with the imagery.

A Proboulos enters and accuses the women of spoiled excesses, beating the drum and mourning Adonis (in the summer Adonia) at the time that Demostratus was urging the disastrous Sicilian expedition (387 ff).¹⁶ Its failure is here attributed to the women and their ill-omened cry. This not only reveals the misogyny of the men, but also the religious power of the women.

The Proboulos was one of the prestigious men who prepared legislation for the (*Boule*). They, in fact, set up the political circumstances for the takeover of the Four Hundred (by suspending constitutional safeguards). Sophocles, a member of this board, was the sole dissenter. This oligarchic reign of terror was another example of male excess, and thus underlines the irony of this Proboulos accusing the women of excess.

The Proboulos debates with Lysistrata in the comedic agon. Lysistrata defends her taking over the money, by saying that the women will manage it as they manage the household finances nowadays (485 ff). she also accuses Peisander and other politicians of using the war funds for their own corrupt ends - a criticism as valid now of politicians as it was then. The Proboulos points out the difference between money used for a public war, and the money the women control for household finance. Lysistrata complains about the silence expected of women (*Lys.* 510-515, cf. the related claim put forward by Pericles in his funeral oration, that woman's glory is being true to her natural character, and she is best who has the least said about her, for good or ill, Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, VI. 46-47).¹⁷ Lysistrata expands the household image to include public affairs, and say that corruption must be eliminated, just as wool must be cleaned, and that diverse strands (foreigners, immigrants, those in debt, the colonies) must be woven together to achieve peace and progress ("make a ball of wool and weave it into a warm cloak" 585-6).¹⁸ This cooperative rather than competitive approach characterizes the solution of the women. It also was something advocated by Euripides, when he showed (*filia*) as a prime virtue to be advocated in the chaotic universe he observed during the Peloponnesian War, and which he replicated in his tragedies.¹⁹ Plato in his *Republic* also wove together diverse strands to achieve a model for political cooperation. A woman who is regarded as the "other" by the dominant male aptly

speaks of “others” contributing to the general prosperity.

We remember that the ruinous Sicilian expedition was promoted by Alcibiades, the degenerate archetype of Greek heroism, now Athenian male *hybris* – over-reaching, self-aggrandizing, putting his individual glory before the state’s welfare. Athenian male *hybris* is here shown countered by Athenian female *sophrosyne*. This same opposition can be found in the *Thesmophoriazusae* and the *Ecclesiazusae*.

Lysistrata decks the Proboulos out as a woman and a corpse, once again illustrating an important ritual function of the female in real life at the same time as exchanging genders and allowing the Proboulos to feel what it is like to be “woman,” “other” and certainly in the case of the corpse, passive (599 ff). At the same time, the satiric commentary is perfect: she is telling him to drop dead, and his arguments have fallen flat. The women claim that they have a valid claim to the wealth, because they contribute men (650). In both these references we see the vital function of women in life and death, and the occupations of preserving life, making clothes and cooking (687). It is obvious that women are contrasting their role in preserving life and resources with the male squandering both.

The women grow restless, and the play proceeds to its climax. Cinesias is titillated by Myrrhine, who leaves him in frustrated straits. The men, persuaded by a naked woman called “Reconciliation,” make peace. Lysistrata claims she has learned her cleverness from listening to her father and older men, so she redresses some of the criticism (or should we say Aristophanes is making his own reconciliation with the audience for his mordant criticism of the men). Aristotle speaks of the “natural” order of husband in charge of wife and children in the house as the magistrates were in charge of the democratic *polis* (*Politics*, I). The end of the *Lysistrata* returns us to the “natural” state.

References to food and clothing are again the themes in the final choruses. Gods are invoked, both the ones that men usually address (Apollo and Zeus), and the ones invoked by females (Artemis, Aphrodite) and of course, Athena, who is the appropriate reconciler of male and female in Athens.

This play shows *Lysistrata* as a valid heroine radically critiquing male policy. She is probably named for the priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimache (*Lysistrata*, literally, “one who dissolves armies,” and *Lysimache*, literally, “one who dissolves battles”). This is a clear reference to the power that women had in the religious sphere. In this

play, female solutions are applied to the male dilemma. We have a return to the status quo at the end, and there is no suggestion that the women remain in power. The women have simply used their domestic skills to bring about some public change, from which they too will reap the benefits of peace. This is typical of comedy, to go through chaos but return to the norm at the end, through release to clarification, the reverse of what happens in tragedy in which by the end the norm is so altered that it is irretrievable, at least for the protagonist. Yet at the same time, as with all good drama, things are never completely the same because of what we have seen and experienced.

The *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 B.C.) shows us women celebrating a festival from which men were forbidden. Once again, we see the importance of women conducting rites essential for the smooth functioning of society. As in the *Lysistrata*, where there were male intruders, here also, a relative of Euripides, Mnesilochus, infiltrates the festival. He is convinced by Euripides to invade the women's meeting, because he had heard that he was to be condemned to death because of his criticism of women. The relative is successful for a while, but is finally discovered. We are amused at his attempts to escape by quoting lines from Euripides' plays. Euripides himself enters the fray, and after he makes peace with the women and through a ruse on the Scythian guard, he secures his relative's escape.

We learn not only about women's place in society, but in this case also how foreign slaves are used. The Scythian is mocked for his language, and also his animalistic sexuality, the way he is finally duped by Euripides. The latter is hardly something new for comedy. As we have noted, women are also condemned for their licentiousness, and in this play the relative, Mnesilochus, makes that point exactly. The women complain that they cannot have as much freedom from their husbands who watch them closely after seeing the atrocities committed by women as depicted by Euripides. One woman also complains that she cannot sell her religious wreaths because few believe in the gods since Euripides. Mnesilochus, however, delivers a misogynist speech, probably somewhat typical of the male view of women as nymphomaniacs, a combination of horror and wishful thinking. But it is just this speech that adds to the relative's unmasking. The action of the women does not add credence to his accusations.

The relative's unmasking is comparable to the discovery of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, and Pentheus imagines the same lurid things that the relative wants the women to confess. Pentheus learns that the women are not engaged in the erotic orgy he had imagined,

as indeed the relative does here. In both cases misogynist musings are proven false. One might be tempted to think that Aristophanes knew Euripides' play. Was it written before 411, and merely performed posthumously in 405?

Both Aristophanes in the *Thesmophoriazusae* and Euripides in the *Bacchae* show the women as above reproach in their religious rites rather than indulging in the sexual orgies that men impute to them. The women in the *Thesmophoriazusae* get Euripides to recant and become their ally. One thinks of the chorus in the *Medea* in which the women claim that a new song will be sung about women, one that praises them instead of slandering them as the male authors had done up to this point (*Med.* 410 ff). Euripides agrees to write these new songs. One might say that this earlier chorus contains the major criticism voiced by the women in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. They demand and get a rewriting of slanderous texts.

This, however, is fantasy, as absurd as Trygaeus flying on a dung-beetle to heaven to recover peace. The slanders will continue, although there is the occasional apology, such as that written by Gorgias defending Helen. We remember that Stesichorus was said to have been blinded for his slanders and had to write a palinode retracting his first negative statement about Helen. Euripides himself, in 412, presented his *Helen*, which showed a guiltless heroine trapped in Egypt, faithful as Penelope awaiting the return of her spouse. This was a time in Athenian history to question some of the old portrayals of women.

The *Ecclesiazusae* (392 B.C.) shows women taking power through a ruse.²⁰ They put on their husbands' clothing (just as men put on women's clothing in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, and the *Bacchae*). They conceived the plan during the Skira (59), a spring festival for a daring, new concept. Cross-dressing is an obvious comic device. There is the additional frisson for the audience seeing "women" dressing as men, when they all know that men take all the parts.²¹ Here women vote themselves into power, having disguised themselves as men (one even is said to have grown body hair and tanned her skin, i.e., assumed male attributes, 60-64). The disguise works and they establish a form of communism and perpetual partying in which all women can legally enforce their own sexual satisfaction. This is the misogynist's nightmare acted in vivid technicolor. Old hags abuse a youth trying to arrange a tryst with his young lover. The women are as abusive as the men they criticized earlier for sequestering young females for themselves. Also mutual sharing of property breaks down because of personal hoarding by the men. the entire

play ends with a banquet, but there is a sour taste. "What is a man, /If his chief good and market of his time /Be but to sleep or feed? a beast, no more." In this play we see a lot of beasts. But that is the essence of comedy, to bring the human beast on stage.

Here we see the cliché of women's concerns put into practice.²² It is the horrific sequel to *Lysistrata*, showing what happens if the women do not go home after they have discovered their sexual power. This may be the product of a cynical old man, written after Athens had lost the Peloponnesian War and was indeed suffering from loss of property and manpower.

Foley makes a distinction between sexual and social reforms claiming, [Praxagora's] "economic scheme...because it shares to some extent in the ideal goals for both household and state, makes a less frivolous comment on the excesses of the contemporary political life controlled and led by men."²³ It is true that there are suggestions for reform, particularly that private property will be used for common good. But it is seen also that this is a miserable failure, given the individual egotism of the people forced to contribute (730 ff). It concludes by one citizen plotting how to keep his goods and take part in the banquet (872-6). The seeds for failure are sown, and there will not be many banquets to come. The women, whereas they gave interesting advice, are shown to be impractical dreamers. But then isn't comedy an impractical dream? Given historical experience of certain attempts to establish an equitable communism, Aristophanes' criticism is more true than false.

In each of these representations women have made suggestions for improving society, some carrying more weight than others. Much misogyny is mixed into the representations, and exploited for comic effect. Sometimes the male perspective of the woman is harnessed as a weapon against the male (e.g., woman as seductive vamp, *Lysistrata*, woman as clever manipulator, *Medea*, or *Helen*). Tragedies and comedies are hardly sources for accurate information about what women did and thought in ancient Athens, but these plays allow us to speculate in new ways.

In the *Lysistrata* and the *Ecclesiazusae* the women invade men's space, although *Lysistrata* shows the women on the Acropolis which is usually men's territory, but is turned over to the women for certain religious activities. In this play, however, the occupation is forced, but enhanced by the authority of the women as religious leaders. We have noted *Lysistrata*'s name resembling the priestess of Athena. In the *Thesmophoriazusae* the men invade the women's space. Drama, as the sphere of Dionysus, is a place where boundaries can be crossed,

and with comedy even more so than tragedy. The cross-dressing and exchanged roles show that the boundaries crossed are hardly confined to the spatial. Language is also co-opted, and as each sex tries to speak like the other, the jokes abound. The laughter, however, is a nervous laughter as the drama infringes the borders of normal boundaries.²⁴

These three plays show us women being faithful to their desire for peace (*Lysistrata*), good fame (*Thesmophoriazusaë*), and for equity in the economic and sexual sphere (*Ecclesiazusaë*). These were concerns which had been articulated earlier by women in tragedy. For instance, the women in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* mounted an urgent plea for peace so insistent that Eteocles accused them of a type of treason and told them to go indoors (181 ff). Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus* kills her step-son for the sake of her fair fame (*erikleä*). Economic and sexual equity is perhaps advocated by the actions of Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia*, Medea in her play and Hermione in the *Andromache*. In each case the outcome is tragic and destructive of life. Aristophanes makes the outcome ridiculous and life nourishing.

In these comedies, women defend their own concerns and use their own "weapons": their sexuality, their craftiness, their talent for mimesis, their good management, and persuasion.²⁵ They are nurturers of life and are defending that which will enhance life, peace, sex and shared fortunes. Some have belittled the idea of women in power as shown in the *Ecclesiazusaë*, calling their rule a perpetual party (although we also saw women exercising domestic values, shared property, and no war). Given the sufferings of the Peloponnesian War, planned and waged by the Athenian male citizens, the devastation following the "party" given by the women would hardly be as dire. Perhaps the spirit of comedy is life enhancing, and one can identify this same spirit with women.

According to many, fifth century Athenian democracy is a nadir in the history of women's power, with an obvious decline from the influence that Sappho was able to exercise.²⁶ One can speculate about this, positing an increase of militarism and militaristic values along with the rise of male homosexuality. One might find a parallel from the period of the cultured women in early Japan, with the Lady Murasaki (ca. 1000) and *The Tale of Genji*, as an example, ceding to the more militaristic values of the Tokugawan period (1600-1868). Women lost in the process.

It is clear that men were considered the social acme in Fifth Century Athens, but in spite of their limitations, women played an

important role even in this fifth century Athenian society.²⁷ Mothers were given prominent seats at festivals because they had given birth to prominent citizens. In many ways, men were female products and the signs were there to show the value of females. Nevertheless, we have to live with certain ambiguities in the representations by males of the disenfranchised "other." If women were so valuable to the Athenian democracy, why did they not have political, legal and economic rights?

Comparative anthropological studies show that it is not inevitable that a woman is deprived of "public" rights. Sometimes she is in charge.²⁸ Much of women's social and political status is a cultural phenomenon, and we can learn from ancient Greece what can be given up in the process of systematic disenfranchisement, but we should not minimize what is retained. Oppressed people also seem to have a way of leaking out of the ideological bottles into which they have been poured.

We do not have the testimony of Fifth century Athenian women themselves, and even if we did, how are we to believe it is reliable? Are women to be deprived of creative fantasy? Perspective is important, and we have too little of hers, so the archeology of our reconstruction is painstakingly slow and difficult, and ambiguities assail us at every point. What is the happiness quotient, and how do we measure it? Do we, as the Greeks, define happiness as the goal of life, or do we endorse success in the public eye as the primary goal? Is happiness success only? success in what sphere? One thinks of what Robert Frost told his granddaughter when she asked him what he thought important in life. "To do good, I believe." "Grandfather, don't you mean to 'do well'?" A moment of reflection and he told her, "Then I mean to do good well."²⁹ The so-called female roles of altruism may have some superiority to the standardly imputed male roles of success.

As Denis de Rougemont said, "*le luxe de demain sera la lenteur au milieau du silence.*" But the silenced woman speaks to us in her representations, and not the least in Attic comedy. She was and is a force to be reckoned with. It is time to focus on her being a heroine instead of a silent victim.³⁰ ❧

Notes to “Democratic Disenfranchisement: Women, Metics, and Slaves of Fifth-Century Athens with Help from Aristophanes.”

1. Barry Strauss, *Athens After the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 81. It is very difficult to get precise figures, as A.W. Gomme and other scholars will attest, *The Population of Athens*, (1933; rpt., Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986). “The Population of Athens Again,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1959) 61ff. William Mitford claimed “only a tenth of the inhabitants at Athens were citizens,” *The History of Greece* (1784-ca. 1790; rpt. 1822), 1. 404, cited by Jenifer Tolbert Roberts in *Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton, University Press, 1994). Roberts has an interesting summary of critical thinking on the role of women, slaves and metics in ancient Athens in “The Otherness Within: Slaves and Women in a Patriarchal Democracy,” *Athens on Trial*, pp. 262-290.
2. Gomme, *The Population of Athens*, p. 26.
3. See M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (1980; rpt. London, Penguin Books, 1992); and his earlier work, *Slavery in Classical Antiquity*, 1960, supp. 1968).
4. There is now substantial bibliography on *Women in Antiquity*, and some fundamental works are: Cameron Averil and Amelie Kuhrt, eds. *Images of Women in Antiquity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983); DeForest, Mary, ed. *Woman's Power, Man's Game: Essays on Classical Antiquity in Honor of Joy K. King*, (Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1993); DuBois, Page, *Centaur & Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982); *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Foley, Helene P., ed. *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1981); Keuls, Eva, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Greece* (New York: Harper and Row 1985); Leftkowitz, Mary R., and Maureen B. Fant, eds. *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Loraux, Nicole, *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes*, trans. Caroline Levine, foreword by Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: University Press,

- 1993); Perdatto, John, and J.P. Sullivan, eds. *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers* (Albany: State University of New York Press); Pomeroy, Sarah B., *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975); Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin and Amy Richlin, eds. *Feminist Theory and the Classics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) and Skinner, Marilyn, ed. *Rescuing Creusa: New Methodological Approaches to Women in Antiquity*, A Special Issue of *Helios* New Series 13.2 (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 1987).
5. Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, trans. Institute of Marxism-Leninism, III (1970, rpt. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983)
 6. Marilyn Katz cites both Keuls and Lefkowitz to illustrate “that radically different assessments of the same material abound in the literature and indeed continue to proliferate,” “Ideology and ‘The Status of Women’ in Ancient Greece,” *History & Theory*, Beiheft 31 (1992), pp. 70-97. Keuls says, “In the case of a society dominated by men who sequester their wives and daughters, denigrate the female role in reproduction, erect monuments to male genitalia, have sex with the sons of their peers, sponsor public whorehouses, create a mythology of rape, and engage in rampant saber-rattling, it is not inappropriate to refer to a reign of the phallus. Classical Athens was such a society,” *Reign of the Phallus*, p. 1. Mary Lefkowitz makes her claims in “Epilogue,” in *Women and Greek Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1986), pp. 133-136.
 7. I am grateful for the seminal work done on this subject by Helene P. Foley, “The Concept of Women in Athenian Drama,” *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, pp. 127-168, and “The ‘Female Intruder’ Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*,” *Classical Philology* 77.1 (January, 1982). pp. 1-21; Froma Zeitlin, “Transvestites of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*” in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, pp. 169-217; Lauren K. Taaffe, *Aristophanes & Women* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).
 8. See Froma Zeitlin, “The Dynamics of Mysogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*,” *Arethusa* 11.1, 2 (1978), reprinted in John Peradotto and John Sullivan, eds. *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*, pp. 159-94 and “Playing the Other: Theatre, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama,”

- Representations* 11 (1985) pp. 63-94. Zeitlin shows that playing the parts of female characters is a useful exercise for male actors, until Plato preferred an exclusively male model and thus banished theatre from his *Republic*. For a general study of patriarchy in ancient Greece see Eva Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus*, cited above. For a nostalgic endorsement of the patriarchy see David Sider's response to Marilyn Katz *Arethusa* 27.1 (Winter, 1994), pp. 105-109. He concludes, "In sum, there can be no full comprehension of any Greek tragedy (even *Philoctetes*) without understanding the role that men want women to play in their lives, p. 109. See also the article to which he is responding, namely, Marilyn Katz's interesting treatment of how women flow out of gender stereotypes in establishing their own characters in tragedy, "The Character of Tragedy: Women and the Greek Imagination," *Arethusa* 27.1 (Winter 1994), pp. 81-103.
9. John J. Winkler, "The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the gardens of Adonis," in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 188-209.
 10. Helene Foley makes this point in "The Concept of Women in Athenian Drama," *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, cited above, pp. 127-168. Bella Zweig compares Native Americans with the ancient Greeks, and shows how a recognition of women's fundamental contribution led to their dominating in the political and economic spheres also in the former society: "The greater importance of women than men to the community grows out of their far greater role in generation, manifested materially by their dominant role in the social and economic life of the community, and which my own observations have seen manifested in political leadership and decision making," "The Primal Mind: Using Native American Models for the Study of Women in Ancient Greece," in *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, p. 158.
 11. Some aptly point out that if one takes this position, it should not be confined to the Athenian male, see H.S. Versnel, "Wife and Helpmate: Women of ancient Athens in Anthropological Perspective," in *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society*, eds. Josine Blok & Peter Mason (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1987); "It may then become evident that there is some sense in Pomeroy's explanation of the oppression of woman in democratic Athens—but was it really so much brighter elsewhere?" p. 78.
 12. For instance, Foley expanded Shaw's characterization of the "female intruder," claiming that his structural opposition of *oikos*

and *polis*, female and male, was rather simplistic. Whereas Shaw might claim that the female invaded the male sphere, Foley shows the interdependence of both spheres. M. Shaw, "The Female Intruder: Women in Fifth-Century Drama," *Classical Philology* 70 (1975); pp. 255-66. See last note for the reference to Foley's article. See also Synnove des Bouvrie, *Women in Greek Tragedy* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1990). another significant article is Froma Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theatre, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," *Representations* 11 (1985), pp. 63-94. See also Philip Slater's interpretation of women's representation in myth and drama along Freudian lines, often based on an infantile fear of the mother, *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968). This is well-critiqued by Helene Foley in "The Conception of Women in Athenian Drama," *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, pp. 137-140.

13. One can see this position is like that of New Historicists working on Renaissance drama. They maintain that Shakespeare and his contemporaries reveal the dominant ideologies of their day, but at the same time, in the very act of promulgating certain ideas—support for the monarch, punishment of traitors, maintenance of order—they showed their weakness and therefore contradicted the very message they meant to manifest.
14. Madeleine Henry cites Elder Olson and Northrop Frye as those who claim comedy as defender of the status quo, Charles Segal as one who says it subverts the status quo, and David Konstan as one who says it does both, "Ethos, Mythos, Praxis: Women in Menander's Comedy," *Rescuing Creusa*, pp. 141-150. She claims that these writers attack the problem from the male perspective, and thus undervalue the heroism of the women who constitute the praxeis that restores the status quo.
15. See John J. Winkler's critique of Marcel Detienne's *Gardens of Adonis*, in his article "The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the Gardens of Adonis," in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 188-209. Winkler endorses the power of women in their religious and domestic contexts claiming "We men have extremely restricted access now to that world-frame constituted by ancient Greek women, but we have every good reason to suppose that it could be characterized as an enclosing vision rather than an imprisoned one," p.209. One should note, however, that much of Detienne's work has been

interesting, and he has made serious contributions to research in these areas.

16. There is a lot of scholarly dissent about the time of the Assembly where Demostratus made his proposal, which Plutarch put in the spring, and the Adonia, which occurs in the summer. Aristophanes was a comic poet, and telescoping time is certainly his prerogative. See Alan H. Summerstein, ed. and trans. *Lysistrata, The Comedies of Aristophanes* 7 (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1990), n. 390-7, p. 173.
17. Silence for, about and by women, extended to their tombstones: they were routinely identified by the name of a male relative, father or husband. So also in legal proceedings: if a woman's own name was used it was usually to cast her in a bad light.
18. Note the close connection of "weaving" and "fabrication," one of the commonly attributed female vices, and in many cases, as here, her virtue.
19. See M. McDonald "Iphigenia's *Philia*: Motivation in Euripedes' Iphigenia at Aulis," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica Nuova Serie* 34.1 (1990), pp. 69-84. for cooperative and competitive virtues, see A.W.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford, University Press, 1960). For the "communistic model," see Plato's *Republic*.
20. There is a useful edition of *Ecclesiazusae* by R.G. Ussher (Oxford: University Press, 1973).
21. See Elizabeth Bobrick, "Agathon in Aristophanes" *Thesmophoriazusae: Playwright and Actor/Male Body and Female Voice*," APA Lecture (Washington, 1994). She shows that in spite of the cross-dressing, and simulated and brief power of women at their meeting, the actual power remains clearly in male hands.
22. One must be careful not to fall into structuralist simplifications which oppose male and female as culture and nature, a simplistic opposition to enhance the control of one over the other. See the informative article by Josine Blok, "Sexual Asymmetry: A Historiographical Essay," in *Sexual Asymmetry*, pp. 1-57.
23. Foley, "Female Intruder," p. 20.
24. On the religious significance of space and borders, besides woman as property inhabiting an inner space, a field to be plowed and identified with Hestia, see J.P. Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes: sur l'expression religieuse de l'espace et du mouvement chez les Grecs," in *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* (Paris: Librairie Francois Maspero, 1965), pp. 97-158.

25. for the mimetic talent of women see two articles by Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theatre and Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," and "Transvestites of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*."
26. Much work has been done on tracing women's role in early Greece. See, for instance, Marilyn Katz, "Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude toward Women," *Arethusa* 6.1. Reprinted in Peradotto and Sullivan, *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*, pp. 7-58.
27. A negative assessment of women's roles is made by H.S. Versnel in "Wife and Helpmate": "The otherwise so egalitarian, democratic Athens of the fifth and fourth centuries seems to distinguish itself negatively in this respect from earlier and later periods and from other Greek cultures such as Sparta...The evocation of an Oriental harem was given its clearest definition by F.A. Wright (1923), who proceeded to explain the ruin of Greek society, particularly that of Athens, as a result of the oppression of two social groups: women and slaves," p. 61. Pomeroy joins in, saying of Athenian men, "The will to dominate was such that they had to separate themselves as a group and claim to be superior to all non-members: foreigners, slaves and women," *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, p. 78. A very different, and more optimistic interpretation is given by A.W. Gomme, "The Position of Women in Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.," *Classical Philology* 20 (1925) pp. 1-25.
28. See H.S. Versnel, 1987 and Zweig, 1993, cited above, and Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Women, Culture, & Society* (Stanford: University Press, 1974), particularly Rosaldo's article, "Women Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview," pp. 17-42; and Sherry B. Ortner, for a particularly bleak view, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" pp. 67-88; and Carol B. Stack, "Sex Roles and Survival Strategies in an Urban Black Community," pp. 113-128. From the latter, one sees that the middle-class white female has a lot to learn from her black sisters about power and freedom, as did Greek citizen wives from foreign hetairae.
29. I owe this observation to an inspirational teacher, Francis Lovett.
30. Sincere thanks to George Huxley, Francis Lovett, Bridget McDonald, Thomas MacCary, Thomas Rosenmeyer and Zeno Vendler for their kind help with this paper. ♣

“Athenian Democracy - No Lawyers”

Robert W. Wallace

The title suggested for my talk by the organizers of this gathering was “Democratic justice-no lawyers.” Now in this title, since democratic justice is presumably a good, lawyers are then, presumably a bad, perhaps considered *the* bad in our judicial system, reflecting of course our society’s mostly negative feelings about these particular creatures—from Shakespeare’s “the first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers,” to the tassel-toed attorney getting crunched by T Rex in Jurassic Park. and indeed, the Athenians were on the whole spared the excesses and deficiencies of the modern legal profession. Yet on several other points, Athens’ system of justice has encountered harsh criticisms, from the Athenians themselves, especially conservatives not wholly enamoured of the democracy, and also from modern legal scholars, in part following Athens’ conservatives and in part in dismay at the judicial execution of Socrates. On the general point, I am not necessarily in disagreement with this reaction. However we construe the condemnation of Socrates—and I’ll come back to that—as a system of justice administered by human beings, inevitably sometimes things did go wrong in Athens’ courts. In addition, certain problems are apparent in the Athenian legal system, that sometimes impeded just verdicts. Finally, while the Athenians were generally an extraordinarily tolerant and freedom-loving people, and generally abided by their democratic slogan “to live as you like,” harsh punishments were meted out to some citizens, under particular circumstances which we shall consider; and Socrates was one of these. However, I believe that the specific criticisms commonly levelled against the Athenian administration of justice are in fact mostly misplaced, and the actual problems of the system were mostly not talked about. The reason for this is that ancient critics of Athens’ courts were primarily taking aim at the democracy, to which they were hostile; their criticisms were fundamentally not practical but ideological. Modern scholars have been influenced by these conservative Athenian judgments because they are the verdicts of intelligent men, and after all, the Athenians did execute Socrates. Just for this reason, America’s founding fathers (if they are still called that) rejected democracy in favor of a representative type of government that directly restricted the power of the *demos*. By contrast, for me the two main criticisms

levelled against Athenian justice, in fact, reflected its greatest virtues and strengths.

I begin by sketching out a picture of Athens' system of justice. The people's courts that were its main feature were also a prominent feature of Athens' democracy. In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, first staged in 423 B.C. the hero, Strepsiades pays a visit to Socrates' Phrontisterion or "School of Thinkology." While there, a student shows him a map of the world. "Look, there's Athens!" "That's not Athens," Strepsiades objectes, "I can't see any jurymen sitting." The prominence of the courts in Athens' democracy is not altogether surprising, given their democratic nature. At the beginning of each year, 6,000 volunteers were called to serve in the courts, from citizens 30 years of age or older. They were called *dikasts*, from the Greek work *dike*, or justice. Each panel of dikasts was either 201 or 401 for cases between private individuals, or 501, 1001, 1501 or even larger for cases thought to pertain to the whole people. (In the great religious scandal of 415, we are told that all 6,000 dikasts sat together as one jury: this followed the mutilation of the city's many statues of Hermes and the revelation of numerous parodies of the ultra-secret mystery cult at Eleusis.) Now, since fifth-century, Athens had a population of perhaps 22,000 adult male citizens over thirty (in the fourth century this was perhaps reduced to 18,000) and the courts met between 175 and 225 days a year. We can see that every year a substantial segment of the citizen population was, virtually every other day, involved in the administration of justice. As Pericles observed in Thucydides', *Funeral Oration*, virtually every Athenian, "is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the city as well... We do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all." Pericles also instituted daily payments for the dikasts, to compensate average citizens for their time - three obols a day, enough perhaps to pay for one's food and perhaps a bit more. Athens' large juries were designed in part to minimize the chances for bribery; and in fact, specific juries were assigned to specific cases only on the very morning that these cases went to trial. Even more important, large juries were regarded not merely as representative of the people, but as the people itself. Therefore, among other points, there was no appeal from their sentences. Finally, courts formed an integral part of Athens' democratic ideology. According to the orator Aeschines, "autocracies and oligarchies are administered according to the tempers of their lords, but democracies according to the established laws... In a democracy, the laws guard the person of the citizen and the government of the

state." The popular courts were first instituted in 594 by Solon-who for me was the founder of Athens' democracy-so that any Athenian could appeal against a magistrate's verdict.

As for the administration of justice, there were no public prosecutors or district attorneys. Private suits could be brought only by the offended party or (in the case of homicide) a relative. More serious cases could be brought by, "anybody who wanted to, *ho boulomenos*," as the Athenians said. This provision, of the volunteer citizen prosecutor, was an ingenious idea of Solon, in order to provide a means of redress, in serious cases, for weaker citizens victimized by the more powerful. By this means, any offender could be prosecuted by his personal enemies on the victim's behalf.

In court, defendants and prosecutors had to present their own cases, although they could buy their speeches from professional speech-writers, called logographers. In contrast, perhaps to lawyers' briefs, these speeches may not have been too expensive: one handicapped person got Lysias (one of Athens' most prominent logographers) to write him a speech arguing, in fact, that he qualified for the dole. (Incidentally, in the course of his speech, this fellow says that he's so poor that he can't even afford a slave to do his work for him-which sheds light on the pervasiveness of slaves in ancient Athens.) In devising the style of these speeches, speechwriters often tried to reflect the particular social situation of their clients-for example, a humble man would not deliver a flowery or poetic oration-in order to conceal the fact of a purchased text and also to win the sympathy of a democratic jury. Prosecutor and defendant each gave two speeches in alternation, with the prosecutor going first. Speeches were timed by a waterclock, *klepsudra*, literally "waterthief": a pot with a hole in the bottom out of which water ran while each litigant was speaking. As for the time allowed, for example in private cases involving amounts between one thousand and five thousand drachmas, seven pots of water or about twenty-one minutes were designated for the first pair of speeches, and two pots or six minutes for the second pair. Four private cases were heard by one court in one day, but only one *public* case, which lasted all day. No trial could last more than one day. One of the most highly valued components of democratic ideology in Athens was freedom of speech, which the Athenians called *parrhesia*. Extant court speeches show that litigants were free to say almost anything, including vituperation of the grossest sort. In Deinarchos' speech against Demosthenes in 323, he calls Demosthenes "this beast," "this hireling," "open to bribes," "a thief and a traitor," "this person to be spit upon, this Scythian - really I cannot contain

myself," "this juggler". Demosthenes himself observed that it is naturally sweet for everyone to listen to *loidoriai* and *katégoriai*, to abuse and accusations. In the ancient world, this freedom of speech was uniquely democratic, and even uniquely Athenian. The dikasts acted as judges of law as well as of fact, and hence in our terms were both judge and jury. After hearing the speeches, they voted immediately by secret ballot.

Various problems could arise with the Athenian administration of justice, which we can identify especially in contrast with the later, more systematically developed legal system of the Romans, which in turn of course has heavily influenced our own. As with democracy itself, however, it is important to keep in mind what the Athenian judicial system accomplished as the first developed judicial system in Europe. Some of its problems were later identified and worked out, but much of the really fundamental stuff, such as the notion of the rule of law, was original to Greece and to Athens. In essence, I believe, many of those Athenian courtroom practices that were not conducive to fair adjudication emerged from the institution of debate between individuals in popular assemblies, such as we see in Homer. Thus, as I have noted, the time allowed for speeches was limited and could never go beyond one day regardless of the complexity of the issue. The opposing litigants could only question each other and could not otherwise be cross-examined, and not even the opposing side could question witnesses or compel them to speak, as for example by our subpoena. As Professor Sally Humphreys of Michigan has argued, in Athens a litigant's witnesses were not in fact *expected* to tell the truth, but rather to support the side for which they were testifying. This, in the judiciary, witnesses originated as friends of the different parties. As in the Assembly, where opponents spoke and the demos voted, no provision was made for deliberation by the dikasts. Aristotle says that deliberation was actually forbidden, although one scholar has rightly questioned how at least discussion among dikasts could be eliminated. During trials litigants frequently appealed to the dikasts to tell each other what they know. Also, as I have said, no possibility of appeal existed if the dikasts made the wrong decision. I point out that virtually none of these issues which we may see as difficulties in the administration of justice, are discussed by ancient critics of the Athenian court system.

A second problem posed by Athens' legal system was that measures designed for one particular benefit proved susceptible to misuse by clever litigants. For example, the (on the whole) commendable provisions for volunteer prosecutors in public cases led to the emer-

gence of sycophants, a word which, for reasons best known to the Athenians, appears to mean “fig-revealers.” These were undesirable volunteer prosecutors—individuals who demanded bribes from those who they either knew or suspected had done something wrong, and whom they threatened to prosecute. Many court speeches begin with elaborate statements to the effect that the prosecutor has long hated the defendant and has finally found an opportunity to strike back at him. This is perhaps not something that modern plaintiffs would normally care to admit: for the Athenians, it was intended to show that the prosecutor was not a sycophantic blackmailer stymied by someone who just wouldn’t pay up. The Athenians clearly saw this problem of sycophants, and tried to suppress them. So, for example, individuals were fined one thousand drachmas for not continuing a prosecution once it had been initiated; such people also lost their right to bring similar suits in the future. A fine of one thousand drachmas was also levied if a prosecutor’s case was so poor that he did not receive one-fifth of the votes. Before their reign of terror in 404, after Athens’ defeat by Sparta, the so-called Thirty tyrants promised to drive all sycophants out of the city. However, as Aristotle said, the freedom of anyone to prosecute major cases was a cornerstone of Athens’ democracy, and nobody proposed to eliminate that, despite the problems it caused.

A second example of this phenomenon, the misuse of judicial provisions, might occur at the initiation of a court case. For many offenses, Athenian law provided various ways to initiate prosecution. Demosthenes rightly represents this provision as designed to facilitate justice, since potential prosecutors might feel more comfortable with one procedure rather than another. “Take a case of theft,” Demosthenes says. “Are you a strong man, confident in yourself? Arrest the thief; you are only risking the one thousand drachmas. Are you rather weak? Guide the magistrates to him, and they will do the rest. Are you afraid even to do this? Bring a written indictment. Do you distrust yourself, and are you a poor man, unable to find a thousand drachms? Sue him for theft before a public arbitrator, and you risk nothing.” However, multiple avenues of prosecution proved open to abuse because of the differences of procedure and penalty. In a homicide case argued by Antiphon, for example, the defendant Euxitheos says he should have been prosecuted directly for the homicide of Herodes, by a private suit for murder, rather than by *apagoge* for *kakourgia*: being led away for bad conduct. For by prosecuting on the nominally lesser charge, the plaintiffs avoided the oath required in homicide cases; the accused was compelled to remain in prison as

someone accused of homicide was not. The prosecutors could request the death penalty for kakourgia, and so lost nothing. Finally, if acquitted, the accused could still be charged with homicide and re-tried. The legal facts surrounding this particular case are not entirely clear, but the general point remains: multiple avenues for prosecuting offenses had advantages but were liable to abuse. A further flaw in these multiple avenues lay in not stipulating identical penalties for identical crimes, however these crimes reached the courts. Thus, to take the flip side of Demosthenes' example, if a thief was arrested in the act and admitted guilt, he was executed. If he was prosecuted by a public suit for theft, he was sentenced as the dikasts thought fit (but not to death). If he was prosecuted by a private suit for theft, he had to restore the stolen property, pay a fine of double its value, and at the court's discretion be imprisoned for five nights and days. In all three of these procedures the criminal act might be identical. By making available a variety of procedures, a criminal may the more surely be brought to justice. But what punishment he got was to some extent up to the personal situation of the man who was prosecuting him.

I now turn to the two main charges levied against Athenian justice by ancient and modern critics. The first and perhaps less significant charge is that, because jury service was paid but not well paid, year after year men too old for ordinary work would volunteer as dikasts, and these became dependent on a steady stream of court cases for their livelihood; hence, the Athenians became litigious, philodikoi. Ever since Aristophanes, the jury of elders is regularly presented as a problem for Athenian justice. Aristophanes, in fact, names a play after these elderly dikasts, who he calls Wasps. But can we accept this criticism? In many societies, and surely in Greece, elders are normally considered a source of wisdom and social stability. We are told expressly that Solon, the founder of Athens' democracy, passed a law that, in the Assembly, men over fifty should speak first. According to Thucydides, the reckless general Alcibiades marshalled Athens' young men to support his military adventure in Sicily in 415. As a sober counterweight, his opponent Nikias then appealed to older and wiser heads. And not only should age have been conducive to the administration of justice: in fact, many dikasts who served year after year gained valuable legal experience. The jurymen of Athens are criticized as elderly primarily because this was one feature of Athens' courts that could be singled out by those who wanted to attack or make fun of democracy; in essence because the administration of justice was in the hands of ordinary people. By contrast, our

court system is almost never criticized for the popular composition of its juries, because, however often our juries reach the wrong decision, the concept of trial by a jury of twelve good men is tightly intertwined with the unchallenged democratic ideology of American society. I add that the view that Athens' elderly jurymen increased the number of cases heard by its courts, seems to me simply a non sequitur. Athenians loved to litigate because they loved to talk and they loved to compete against each other, especially if by means of verbal dexterity, they could make themselves a fortune at some enemy's expense.

The second and more significant charge levied against Athens' democratic judiciary is the popular court's susceptibility to so-called mob emotions. This has led to the charge of sometimes arbitrary verdicts, both by ancient critics and by modern scholars. The charge of mob emotions, something less than the cool and impersonal enforcement of the law has various aspects. First perhaps was the effect of what we might call irrelevant rhetoric in the judicial process. Lysias says that even if a defendant seemed guilty, he could be acquitted if he mentioned valiant deeds performed by ancestors and proved that he had served the city well. In Xenophon's *Apology*, Socrates is told by a certain Hermogenes, "Don't you see that the Athenian courts have often been carried away by an eloquent speech and have condemned innocent men to death, and often on the other hand the guilty have been acquitted either because their plea aroused compassion or because their speech was witty?" Litigants often sought to demonstrate that they were upstanding citizens, and their opponents, blackguards. Such character statements are forbidden in many modern courts; and indeed, Athenian provisions requiring litigants "to keep to the matter at hand" appear to have been designed to limit this kind of testimony. But most speeches include such materials, as we saw in Deinarchos' attack on Demosthenes. In *Wasps*, Aristophanes satirizes and parodies various devices which speakers used to pull the wool over dikasts' eyes and distract their attention from the weaknesses of a case.

Scholars have also called attention to other factors which played on the emotions of dikasts, in particular, the role played in court by family, community and friends, and also by commotion, or hubbub, *thorybos*, among the dikasts themselves. The community, in the form of vocal supporters amid the crowd of spectators, was sometimes a significant element in court cases. Defendants commonly brought into court their wives and children to win sympathy from the dikasts; Plato's Socrates actually apologizes for not doing this. After the main

speeches, friends and relatives might, with the dikasts' permission, briefly address the court, usually to supply character evidence. Finally, among the jury, hubbub appears to have occurred frequently, and was sometimes encouraged by litigants. One particular defendant, a rich man named Apollodoros, complained that in his case, the roar from the jury box was so great that he couldn't say a single word, and so was defeated. The provision in the dikastic oath, "I will listen impartially to both sides," may be a provision against hubbub, which nonetheless appears to have continued.

A third factor that encouraged verdicts not based on narrow legal grounds is that typically Athenian laws did not precisely define offenses. For example, the rubric under which Socrates was charged was impiety, but the law nowhere specified that impiety was. Socrates was also charged with corrupting the young, which certainly in itself was not a legal offense. However, Socrates nowhere appears to have challenged the legality of the charges against him. Aristotle states that Athens' laws were in fact noted for their obscurity, which some thought Solon did deliberately, in order to increase the power of the demos. In the absence of judges to instruct them on legal matters, dikasts could only listen to the inevitability one-sided discussions of the meanings of different statute laws and previous cases by plaintiff and defendant. And unlike the United States and Britain, where the scope and meaning of particular laws come to be established by precedent, each court of Athenian dikasts decided these for itself, on any given day. As for cases where no law seemed relevant, the dikasts swore, "Where there are no laws, I shall decide as seems most just to me."

In my view, these various criticisms of the Athenian judicial system, based on the so-called emotions of the mob, obscure the basic orientation of that system and conceal its great strength. First, I should note that the effects of such emotions on the jury should not be exaggerated. From what we can see, Athenian jurors generally tried to be fair and to enforce the law code; they certainly did not act largely on the basis of personal feelings. The often highly technical, detailed discussions of the fine points of specific laws in court speeches indicate that dikasts viewed the provisions of the lawcode as both relevant and highly significant. On the other hand, whereas in our legal system cases are supposed to be tried strictly on their merits, with all external factors excluded from consideration (even, for example, a defendant's prior criminal record), the Athenians took a different approach. In adjudicating a case, in addition to the facts, the dikasts were fundamentally concerned to know whether the litigants

were actually worth voting for. Were their political views democratic? Had they served the community well? Did they have good characters and families that needed support? Dikasts judged defendants almost always in the light of the law, but also quite consciously in the common-sense light of community-standards (their critics said mob-standards). Theirs was the rule not simply of law, but also the community. As in the case of impiety, dikasts were guided by their own sense of what was right in a particular case, as well as by the terms of their law code. This also applies, in spades, to the so-called irrelevancies within Athenian legal speeches, the character-assassinations above all. From the community's perspective, such passages are even an essential part of a legal speech. Chaps who brought their families or friends into court were demonstrating to the community that they were worthy members of it. It was sometimes difficult to determine whether on a particular charge a defendant was guilty; the Athenian took the position that sometimes a specific offense was not so important if a defendant could show himself to be a good and otherwise upstanding Athenian.

Hubbub, well symbolizes the complex relationship between law and justice at Athens. Although under the rule of law the dikasts took an oath to avoid hubbub, it was both common and useful in Athenian courts. The sources make clear that by means of *thorybos*, the dikasts could object to the relevance of a particular line of argument, thus performing one of the functions of our judges. At other times, hubbub was simply a way of having done with a litigant for whom the community had no sympathy—like Apollodoros.

The community in court could sometimes be harsh against those who were judged to have wronged it. I have mentioned that the Athenians valued free speech, *parrhesia*, but it is important to note that *parrhesia* did not mean protected speech. In the Assembly, for example, individuals were liable if something they said led to evil consequences, even if the Assembly had initially voted for what they proposed. In Thucydides, Diodotos tells the Athenians, "You would take rather more care over your decisions if the proposer of a motion and those who voted for it were all subject to the same penalties. As it is, on the occasions when some emotional impulse on your part has led you into disaster, you turn upon the one man who made the original proposal and you let yourself off, in spite of the fact that you are many and in spite of the fact that you were just as wrong as he was." This conduct of the Athenians may strike us as unfair, but it did not seem so to them. If bad advice hurt the community, those who had offered it were punished.

This community orientation of the Athenian justice sheds light on the trial of Socrates. For most of us, in twentieth-century America, highly sensitive to our own tradition of religious freedom, that trial represents an egregious example of intellectual persecution. Indeed, the contemporary tradition that Socrates was prosecuted in part for not believing in the gods of the city, is explicit. However, as has long been recognized, in Socrates' case impiety was only one, and probably not the main, factor in his condemnation. Above all, he had many friends and former students including Critias, among the thirty tyrants, who cruelly dominated Athens after that city's defeat in 404, shortly before Socrates' trial. These associations must have been a significant issue for many dikasts. Later in the fourth century, Aeschines remarked that the Athenians executed Socrates because he had taught Critias.

It has been easy to overestimate the extent of the Athenians' prejudice against intellectuals. It is worth remembering, for example, that year after year they paid to hear various characters in Euripides utter the grossest blasphemies. Socrates had philosophized in Athens for forty years without being harmed. In fact, it seems clear that most Athenians were quite intrigued by him. However, when his students overthrew the democracy and caused many deaths and much destruction, it became clear that he was a menace to the community, and had to be eliminated. Some scholars imply that, as a group, the Athenians might be quite superstitious, terrified of possible divine consequences if they sheltered impious philosophers in their midst. In part, as a result of the influence of comparative anthropological studies, notably by E.R. Dodds, we have all become attuned to the "primitive" and "irrational" in ancient Greece. The most obvious counterbalance to this conception is supplied by Athens' Sicilian Expedition of 415. Shortly before the expedition sailed, there occurred the two greatest sacrileges ever in Athenian history, as I have mentioned: The mutilation of the statues of Hermes, and numerous parodies of the ultrasecret Eleusinian Mysteries. Now, it was a topos in the ancient world that it was dangerous to get into a boat with a philosopher - after all, a convenient storm was an easy way for the gods to be rid of annoying critics or skeptics; and many philosophers were in fact rumored to have died at sea. Nonetheless, in 415, shortly after these sacrileges, the Athenian fleet *sailed*. Even though their commander, Alcibiades, was directly implicated in the sacrilege, Athenian sailors did not hesitate to board the boats with him.

The quick and resolute punishment of those who had harmed the

polis can best be viewed from the wider perspective of the relationship between the individual and the community that is attested for Athens. It is a standard theme in Attic literature that the community must take precedence over individual rights. In Thucydides, Pericles remarks, "When the whole state is on the right course, it is a better thing for each separate individual than when private interests are satisfied but the state as a whole is going downhill." The orator, Andocides, also contends that when the state is prospering, each Athenian is better off individually, but "those who do not identify their interests as individuals with yours as a community can only be hostile to the city." These perspectives also applied in daily life. In the case of ostracism, for example, none of those politicians banished from Athens for ten years had committed any crime. Yet for the good of the community, it was thought better that they leave. The same principle applies in respect to the "crime" of deceiving the people, or of giving them bad advice, or of losing military battles; general who lost battles were notoriously and rightly reluctant to return home. In every case these individuals may have been blameless, and their punishments seem to us a violation of individual rights. But their advice or action had harmed the community, and so they were punished. Socrates' legal defense consists mainly of demonstration of his usefulness to the community. The reason for this attitude is clear. Whereas our own principle of protecting the individual against the state was a reaction against oppressive authoritarian government in Europe, the Athenians and other Greeks had every day to worry about the survival of their societies at the hands of a single disloyal individual. In the dead of night, a single traitor could open the gates of the city and let the enemy in, and everyone would be killed in their beds. Indeed, the Athenians' almost casual propensity to execute people in defense of the polis is a noteworthy characteristic, especially in a democracy which regarded itself as gentle, or *praos*. Thus, for example, shortly after the Athenian general amnesty of 403, a man who tried to prosecute an offense committed before 403 was executed. According to Demosthenes, a certain Pyrrhos, a member of the noble family of the Eteoboutadai, who out of poverty served on an Athenian jury although a state debtor, was executed. Many of those denounced for parodying the mysteries in 415 were executed. Thucydides remarks that it was impossible to say whether these executions were just, but "it was quite clear that the rest of the city benefited greatly." In 404, Socrates' friends had in fact helped let the Spartans inside. Socrates' execution was just one of many, done for the good of Athens. There is no reason why we should single him out for our special horror.

Finally, then, how well did this mix of law and community judgment work as a system of justice? In reported court cases where we often have only one side of the argument and often no clue of the verdict, it is often difficult to determine the justice of the dikasts' decision. However, a similar body of people voted in the democratic Assembly, and I routinely challenge my students to find one mistake that the demos made during the democracy's two thousand year history. (There are probably one or two.) In general, however, we may say that a mix of law and community provides less protection for individuals who fail to conform to community standards, while excusing those who were otherwise good citizens for single mistakes. To their credit, however, the Athenians tended not to pursue eccentric individuals unless some positive harm resulted from their actions. They did indeed uphold their creed of living as you like, in private life. By the so-called open texture of their legal system, Athenian jurisdiction gained flexibility, and minimized otherwise undesirable verdicts based on legal technicalities. Athens' large juries could not be bribed, and also could not be intimidated: pay meant that all citizens could participate. Finally, the Athenians did manage to avoid the vices associated with modern lawyers: high fees and a legal system removed from the grasp of ordinary citizens. As the Italian ashtray I saw in Naples so eloquently put it, "Better a mouse in the mouth of a cat, than a man in the hands of a lawyer." 🐭

The Impact of the Electronic Press on Democracy: Panel Discussion

Panelists: Christopher Hitchens, Colman McCarthy, Donald Lambro

Moderator: Thomas Oliphant

Oliphant: If I could presume to summarize, it seems to me that you all today have been talking a little bit about an inherent conflict between the ideal and the real. The ultimate example of such a conflict, right now before us, is modern American journalism. And this afternoon is just a perfect opportunity to try and think a little bit about who we are and what we do.

In the last 24 hours, those of us who write, comment, and report for a living, especially the generalists among us, have been trying to absorb yet another new American policy in the Balkans (continued fighting and killing), a most unusual press conference by the First Lady of the United States, and last, but hardly least, the death of our favorite source, Richard Nixon. It is an interesting time to consider what we do and the way we run around ripping up editorial pages and starting all over again, changing Sunday papers, magazines and network television shows and all the rest of it.

By way of introduction I was tempted to ask you to imagine the trial of Socrates covered live on "Court TV." Meanwhile, his tormentors and accusers argue the merits of his case live with Larry King and, to elicit sympathy, members of his family appear on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" while Athenians simultaneously record their feelings via the keyboards of "Athens on-line."

We will begin by talking a while among ourselves and them, after a bit, encourage you to stand up and ask us anything you want to. I want to ask one question and I want to pick Don Lambro to be the guinea pig for it because of his deserved reputation for care, thoroughness and sobriety, and hope that our two more philosophical commentators will be inspired by what he has to say.

The lead-off question I think we ought to start with concerns this amazing cacophony, technology, diversity – however you want to summarize American media today. Don, tell us whether your analysis concludes that our media essentially serve, corrupt, frustrate or help the process of democracy.

Lambro: I'm someone who has been in journalism now since the 1960s, someone who has been very critical of the news media. In part, that is why I got into it, because I thought there needed to be some balance restored to it. But I am someone who is very bullish about the future and what we can achieve in the information age that we are in, one which I believe is opening up the democratic process on a scale that was perhaps unimaginable a number of decades ago. I think the direction we are following in terms of the explosion of communication niches, cable television, and fiber optics, is very promising. You haven't seen anything yet, in terms of additional media outlets, when Americans will be able to plug into any part of government, any hearing that is going on, in a five hundred-channel network.

Barry Dillard, the Chief Executive Officer for QVC, was on television the other day talking about how they are on the threshold of a technology now, where we Americans will decide our own programming. We will take a channel and draw from a variety of programming choices we wish to see and virtually sculpt our own channel. So I think that is going to open up tremendous opportunities for a more informed electorate.

We live in very complicated times. I am not one of those people who is pessimistic about the future and about democracy. On the contrary, I am very optimistic and I think that the more diversity we have in the media, the better. Look at the growth of our sources of information in the last decade, look at the newsletter industry, which provides very specific information in specific areas in which people are interested. I think we are going to have a more informed electorate because of all this.

C-SPAN is just the tip of the iceberg. I think we are going to have a lot of special channels with which people will be able to plug into town meetings, news conferences, and discussions. We see the whole rise of the talk show industry; the radio industry has really become a town meeting for the country. I am someone who is not pessimistic about people. The issues are not so complex that we can't deal with them. I think we are able to deal with the information age and assimilate a lot of information, a lot more than we are now getting. One wonderful thing about the American people is that they have this very healthy, innate skepticism about politicians particularly, and about government. We have seen that.

I love the story about Morris Udall when he was campaigning in New Hampshire. He went into a barber shop, stuck his hand out to the man in the barbershop and said, "Hi, I'm Mo Udall, running for

President." The man said, "Yeah, we were just laughing about that."

So, the American people really don't trust politicians. They look at them skeptically. What I do think is that we need to be very careful about making sure that there is diversity in the news media. I think that is very important. It bothers me that surveys show that young people do not read newspapers and they are very uninformed. I would like to see our educational system make a daily newspaper a daily text, and develop habits in terms of reading which are very important to an informed electorate. I think you can be very uninformed if you are just watching television.

The other thing I would finally leave with you is the issue of how we look at democracy and the communications network. The rise of Ross Perot was interesting in a number of political perspectives, in terms of the impact telecommunications has on the electorate. It was somewhat disturbing that a gentleman could come out of nowhere, a creature of television. People did not know a great deal about him except the message he was selling, and yet he could quickly get to twenty percent of the vote. We have to be very careful, I think, careful of this information feast by which someone who, next time, may come and sweep people along and get fifty-one percent of the vote, someone who we may not really know anything about, someone who may not serve the cause of democracy.

Oliphant: We may have seen a little of that in Italy last month. Colman, could you tell us if you feel as good about this technology, this industry in terms of its impact on our public life?

McCarthy: I get kind of nervous when I hear that the media are having all these dinners with Caesar and the Pharaohs. (This is in reference to some light hearted banter that had been mentioned with reference to a White House dinner for the press.) I think it would be much better if the press were to have dinner at some of the homeless shelters around our city. That is where you find out who the victims are. Too often we have media experts who don't identify with the victims, don't go out and realize that we have an economy based on war preparations in this country, and that people are suffering on the margins. So we ought to be a little more wary of the people we associate with.

As for the electronic media, I think it is fine we have all these wonderful programs, C-SPAN and so forth. But I wonder how many journalists actually go out on their own, how many have organized their blocks, organized their streets to do something about the prob-

lems in their own areas of the city. How many of the White House press corps ever show up at a Neighborhood Council meeting on Thursday evenings? That is where the citizens are living.

Too many of us in the press intend to become show biz people. We make enormous amounts of money on the lecture circuit and interview those who make enormous amounts of money. Three - fourths of Clinton's cabinet are millionaires. You look at the Sunday morning talk shows – those are millionaire journalists. I have nothing against millionaires but they tend not to think about their problems the way thousandaires do.

Oliphant: Colman, let me press you a little bit further. Tell me how you assess the impact of this media system on our life and on our political life.

McCarthy: I think it almost drugs a lot of people, creates the illusion, "Oh, I am on the inside now. Look at that, I can phone the President, he is on a talk show. I can call Larry King and get on the air." I mean, these folks watching a program ought to be at the Neighborhood Council meeting worrying about how they are going to make the streets safer. That is where we have to start a democratic change. Change comes from below, not from above.

Oliphant: Hitchens, I have never seen you happy about anything you have surveyed in the world, so please share your thoughts with us.

Hitchens: I couldn't help but notice that you called on me for my philosophical role and for my sober contribution. In a chorus from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," T.S. Eliot asks a very good question when he says, "Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?" I know how to be excited as any journalist does, as any writer does, about the ways in which technology has, so to say, "empowered" our profession. I remember the days when one was getting faxes from Tiananmen Square a couple of years ago from people who, only a few years before, had been unable to communicate with the outside world or learn from it.

I have seen, in fact, in my own lifetime as a foreign correspondent, censorship made technologically impossible, and I regard that as an unambiguous gain. I remember years ago reading what is still, I think, the best essay written on this by the German philosopher Hans Magnus Enzenberger called "The Consciousness Industry" in which

he said there was a natural conflict between the forces and relations of production, and that machinery, such as computers, which would in a while abolish hierarchy in exchange for information. He took a line from Bertolt Brecht's theory of radio to say that, in principle, it is already the case that anything that can be a receiver can be a transmitter; that any television set or telephone or even transistor radio, anything that can get things through to you, can get things back from you. In a sense everyone can become a participant. And I thought that was optimistic, too.

And there was Dwight MacDonald's famous essay on mass cult and mid-cult where, in order to try and solve the broad problem of differential markets, he proposed what he called "narrow casting." I think Don Lambro slightly alluded to it, in his somewhat Panglossian, one-dimensional welcome to the new age, when he said that people will soon be able to select their own channels (I am sorry, also the court and convenience shopping channels). I know that is true. For example, Carter Brown, the Director of the National Gallery down the road, wants to set up a fine arts T.V. channel where he thinks he can get a picture so fine and transmission so excellent that he can get enough subscribers from the museum-goers of America, that all the people who missed the Matisse Exhibition could be decently, electronically, aesthetically taken around it in their own homes, and this is a thought.

But what I want to know is: will these differential channels and modems and so forth be taken separately, or together? Where would that leave the concept we are meant to discuss today, which is that of the Agora? Where would we find the common meeting place? Where would democracy actually come together in order to reason? Would everyone be in another room doing his or her own thing?

And here is the paradox. Would we therefore be open to the cheapest and most vulgar electronic manipulation – not daily, but hourly and half-hourly opinion polls? Some more of the "electronic town meetings" where you didn't know who was in the chair, or how he got there, or why he was the one asking the questions, though the pressure of such a man would be hard to escape. Garbage in, garbage out, in other words, would still hold, no matter what refinements and discriminations the market was able to bring. I end by restating the question, "Where is the knowledge that we lose in information?"

Oliphant: Let me press you a little further if I might. What is your analysis of the impact all of this print and electronics is having on American society and public life right now?

Hitchens: I have a feeling that it is doing what people want it to do. It is making their lives easier. However, what I fear is necessary and what I think is the discipline that the Agora is intended to impose, is to make people's choices harder, tougher, starker and so on. The whole search that is conducted by town meetings, and by opinion polls, is a search for consensus, which is assumed to be a good thing in advance. You notice in this country the word "partisan" is always used as an insult and the word "bi-partisan" threatens to emerge in some impending debate, "My God, if it goes on like this we'll have two separate parties before we know where we are." The implicit admission here is that we have a one-party culture, at any rate for the moment. That assumption, incidentally in my opinion, is not false. I think the impact of the term "user-friendly" is a sinister one. It suggests to me another means of postponing tough choices and welcoming instant gratification. I believe we have enough means of doing that, as matters stand.

Oliphant: Well, Dr. Pangloss, I assumed you would be a little bit assaulted from your right, if not from your political right. Let me ask you to be a little more specific and help us understand some of the sources of your optimism and confidence. What is it about the way the American media is operating now, something that it does, or where it works that gives you the kind of confidence about this future that you express?

Lambro: Looking over the last ten years or so, our country as it has decade after decade, goes through various ups and downs in crises and where we ask our leaders to deal with problems and the nation has to deal with them. We have been through assassinations and the depth of very deep recession. There was a lot of economic pain in the community. We weather these things. We do not have the constitutional upheavals that many other nations have. I think our mass communication media, and having an informed electorate, has a lot to do with that.

I don't want to be a Pollyanna on this. I alluded to a few concerns I have and I think there are many others. I think television has an enormous capacity to oversimplify or to distort where our country is going and I think sometimes we Americans can be swept along by the way television defines what America is. If you watch television news on any given evening you are led to believe that this is a slice of what is happening in America. It isn't. What you are being shown is, "here is where that mass murder took place, here is where this factory

closed down." But it doesn't tell you what the other 260 million Americans are doing and what life in other communities is like where things are very normal and problems are minimal.

Sometimes television can distort what is going on in America's economy. If you gauge the growth of the economy in the fourth quarter of 1992, and compare that to the fourth quarter of 1993, in other words, the last year of Mr. Bush's administration versus the first year of Mr. Clinton's, fourth quarter over fourth quarter, which year did the economy grow more? Most Americans will tell you it was the year Mr. Clinton came in. Confidence came back. Actually it was the previous year, 3.8 percent in 1992, the Federal Reserve Board can give you these figures, versus 3.2 percent for Mr. Clinton.

Now, anyone watching the evening news would never know that. All you saw were factories shutting down. Some of the TV reports were so simplistic and, I think, so shallow that you could be swept along by false economic information. That is why I am in the news-writing business. I think to be truly informed you have to read newspapers.

One final thought on this. Newspapers are moving to on-line computer networks where we will now be getting our newspapers on visual display terminals that will be in our kitchens, maybe on our breakfast nook tables, whatever, and stories will be updated constantly. I think you will be able to get fuller texts of stories to draw your own conclusions. How many times have you watched a news story on television and just weren't sure what the story really was all about, whether something was missing from the story? It didn't seem to quite hang together. I think the health care issue is an example of how television does a very poor job of taking on a complicated issue. Maybe Whitewater would be a better example of how T.V. treats a complicated issue. You really don't know all the details unless you can read a good treatment of it.

I think all of this is coming together and I think people are able to absorb the information we are going to have in the information age. I think that is going to lead to a more informed electorate and in the long term will lead to better government.

Oliphant: What do you think, Colman? Is there an illusion of access to information in some conflict with reality? You talk to people, particularly at the neighborhood level. This system has some technological evolution still to go, but we already have enough of it to gain at least a little glimpse of what is coming. How is it getting through now, in what form?

McCarthy: I think, first of all, it is important to understand who the media are. Just take the print journalists. There was a study done a few years ago about the number of prizes that journalists give to themselves. Over 400 journalist awards are given to other journalists. You notice this when you read their obituaries. I assure you the first line will always begin: "John Smith, prize-winning journalist, died in his sleep yesterday." With 450 awards given every year it is assured that for every journalist who dies, you can start with that first sentence. We are more vain than the people who give out Hollywood Oscars. We make them look as humble as St. Francis. So when you have a vain glorious profession like that, you are not going to get a lot of hard line journalists covering things. After you strip away the nonsense of the awards, the only prize that matters, of course, is when the reader picks up something you have written and says to himself or herself, "If that writer hadn't written that, I wouldn't have heard about it." That is the only prize that matters. The rest is show biz. There are a few of those journalists around, and all of you know who they are. You can read their stuff, and you can feel you are going to get something here that you are not going to get elsewhere. Those journalists who have that as their ethic, are the ones I think we ought to be relying on.

Oliphant: Christopher, think of this system not just in its corporate form as it now exists, not just in its technological form, nor even print versus video, and react to what Colman said. Tell me whether all of this tends to homogenize a point of view, or does it give what, in a more idealized way, we would describe as "information" and "argument," etc. Is that what the American people are being offered by the likes of us?

Hitchens: It is certainly true that with this enhancement with technological possibility there has come a shrinkage. Perhaps coincidentally, but not completely, this occurs in the range of choice. For example, the number of large American cities that now have a choice of newspapers is down to about three or four. About twenty years ago probably around fifty big cities had more than one newspaper. When you look now at what the choice actually is, even in cities like New York, the choice isn't very real.

There is also the possibility of really getting a speedup of the instant replay through which the state or powerful interests can talk very quickly to an increasing number of people with a simplified message: thus you have possibilities of rapidly, massively misinforming a

lot of people. So that within days, if all goes well, if the White House pumps it out enough, there will be people standing up in town meetings and saying, as if they had thought of it themselves, "I'd rather hear about health care than Whitewater." You want to say to them, "Did you think of that all by yourself or did you get it, by any chance, from somewhere else?" It is often in the same words that the White House was putting out a couple of days before. Rather scary.

Furthermore, if you ever read the "news analysis" pieces on, say, the Savings and Loan scandal, or the final report of the special prosecutor in Iran-Contra, on B.C.C.I., on IraqGate and now on Whitewater, in all cases the public gave up because the story had become too complicated. In other words, in some sense they had been drowned in information. Now everyone says, "We lost the reader way back there. We killed them with what we told them." That, I think, cannot be right.

Let me take a crowd pleasing example, if I may—the Macedonian question. There has not been one article in the whole of the American press that answers the question, "Why are the Greeks (pardon the expression) pissed off about this Macedonian business?" There have been many, many articles saying, "It appears that these people living in Greece are very easily upset over stuff like names." There has not been one piece that said, "Here is how you would feel if you were a Greek." Now I know it is not beyond the wit of man to compose such a piece. In fact, I got so annoyed I had to go out and write one myself. What if I was a reader? I would have been totally let down.

Oliphant: Does it not also strike you as odd that this morning one might have searched the American press in vain for any account of the fact that Prime Minister Papandreou was even here?

Colman, let me come back to the individual whose cause you champion so eloquently. What is it like for an American individual today to be surrounded by all this? Is this a great opportunity, in the sense that any citizen has the opportunity to satisfy, almost without limit, a thirst for information, knowledge or argument? Or is the individual under some kind of thumb whose purposes are not so noble?

McCarthy: I teach a daily high school class in Bethesda, and we study non-violence, Ghandi, King and all the other pacifists. It is easy to arouse students to be outraged about some of the social issues

going on. They are all sophisticated children in Bethesda and Chevy Chase. The problem I find among students, and also among many of us adults, is that we all tend to suffer from outrage overload. I can consume only so many outrages and then my circuits blow. So we tend to shop around for outrages and here in this city we tend to be ruled by the media, not by people of various political viewpoints, but by various interests.

Interests have replaced parties. This interest group is outraged by this issue, another has its own outrage. So, by the end of just one week – even by Thursdays or Wednesdays – I am suffering from outrage overload. How do you sort all of this out? Go home and turn on the media and listen to more. All of us have to deal with that problem. I admire people very much who get involved with one cause and stay with it year after year. Too many of us jump around. I interview a lot of people who are cause-jumpers. Last year they were outraged about the whales, then it was prison reform, then it was the ozone layer and then the owl. You take all your animals and you can pick whatever endangered animal you want to be outraged about.

Oliphant: Let me put that point to Donald for a second, and then you can say what you will. Doesn't Colman have something when he talks about a media culture including the reactions to it you hear from individual citizens? Is this stimulus response or is it information education?

Lambro: Colman mentioned something about prizes. I am not sure that the fact that any particular industry gives each other prizes is relevant. I don't think there are too many, and I haven't gotten any of the ones that he mentioned. But is there a sector that anyone here knows that doesn't give each other prizes? We give our students prizes. The entertainment industry gives itself prizes every day. The business industry as well, is notorious for that. This is what we do as a society and we can discuss it, but I don't think it makes any of us better or worse people because we do that.

The legitimate charge against the media, I think, is perhaps that in some sectors they have gotten lazy and there is a dominant media culture. I have done a lot of writing about wasteful spending, and what I have seen over many decades is that the media in this town tends to defend government and goes to great lengths to avoid looking into where the money goes, or where it is being wasted, or to defend certain programs from those who wish to dig into them. So there is that charge. But on the whole, one factor that I think we

might want to touch upon is how this is affecting democracy, which is the subject of this meeting. What we want here is diversity. We want a menu of choices. I am not concerned as Colman is, that we have all these various products and that the American people may not be able to make heads or tails of them. The fact is that Americans have a wonderful filtration system which allows them to decide what interests them, and they choose and they decide. They can be very efficient about it and very ruthless.

Oliphant: Would you make such an assertion about 1992, for example? Would you say that for the citizen, the menu of choices and opportunities was vastly expanded by some of the innovations that came along in 1992. That the choices America made were relatively more informed than they had been in prior years? Apply this to something specific.

Lambro: With one caveat – how the media culture distorted the economy – I think that, by and large, there was more diversity, more choices and the result we are seeing politically is a more volatile political system. I think this has a lot to do with the speed with which information is developed and is thrown at the American people. They have to assimilate it. I think this has led to a more volatile political process.

One example of that. It is not so easy now to keep a politician's record secret. It is now one computer button away, one Nexus search away. Someone told me the other day that they decided because of Whitewater and the cattle futures stories to do a Nexus on how many times the President used the word "greed." It is a word that he used in his campaign and he has used it since. In the last two months he has not mentioned the word once. Only a computer allows you to go through and find out, what he said and when he said it. The result of this volatility is that we are seeing a tremendous surge of retirements in Congress, a tremendous number of races that are being won by smaller margins. The American people are angry, they are cynical and I think they now have more information to make intelligent choices. Maybe it will lead to some of these older people being pushed out.

Oliphant: Christopher, if I might, is it your judgment, speaking generally, that this impact of media on democratic function is the result of a general appeal to the head or to the funny bone? What accounts for the volatility Donald was describing?

Hitchens: What would account for that, and for some of the fluctuations in coverage that I mentioned earlier, would be something that isn't often discussed: namely, the impact of the *population* on the *press*. The media in America are fantastically populist. That is really the only political thing they all have in common. They all don't just publish opinion polls, they take opinion polls basically to see how they are doing, what sort of stories people like, what kind of representation they want. The very strong presumption is that what people want, they ought – generally speaking – to get. The media are not going to bore them for too long with something they are not interested in. So, once it is found that no one wants to read any more stories about, say Lawrence Walsh, there won't be any more stories about him, and if there are, they are written in a different way.

This goes to my point about the Agora that I tried to make earlier and it shifts the spotlight somewhat from the media. If there is no actual market place of ideas and debate, there is only the notion of one. If you have an education system that seems to me to teach chiefly self-esteem and an entertainment industry that depends on the cretinization of the public or perhaps its idiotization, (the Greek word, *idiotis* I understand, meant someone who did not take any interest in public affairs) the media isn't going to be able to make up that democratic deficit. There must be something going on in this country that would be worthy of the title "crisis of citizenship." People don't feel they are citizens anymore.

Now, let me check off that list again: Savings and Loan, Iran-Contra, IraqGate, which was after all the supposed preparation – the unacknowledged preparation – for the Gulf War, B.C.C.I. and Whitewater. If the public announces itself bored with all this, it may not be just a fault in the coverage, though the coverage may certainly be faulted. It may be that people do not wish to know the truth of these stories because the truth would suggest to them that the country was not being very well governed or administered or their finances very well run. If that was their firm, settled conclusion, wouldn't it be incumbent on them to get out and go to meetings as Colman suggested, to register to vote, to register others to vote, to take an interest? They don't wish to do this.

Oliphant: But using your example of the Savings and Loan industry, isn't it true that, as people learned about what had happened, they actually became exercised and extremely interested and, if you will pardon the word, outraged by what had happened.

Hitchens: That is true to a limited extent, but actually I think the vast complexity of the story was still given as an excuse for the long term inaction. At any rate, I have a suspicion that a population that wishes to be fooled will be fooled easily.

Oliphant: Go ahead, Donald.

Lambro: Well, the Savings and Loan was so shallow and oversimplified in the reporting that the American people don't know really who is to blame. It is extraordinary that Mario Cuomo can go before the Democratic National Convention and state that the bankers were bailed out by the Savings and Loan money. We didn't bail out the bankers, we bailed out the depositors. If the Governor cannot understand this simple basic fact, then how can the American people understand what happened in the Savings and Loan crisis?

I tend to disagree. Too many times the media is very elitist and in any given story where do they tend to go? Who are the talking heads you see? They are the high and mighty here in Washington. There are some committee chairmen talking about the problems in the economy and very rarely do they go down to Main Street and talk to Joe Smith who is running a pizza parlor. He can tell you what is really going on in the economy. They don't do that. So I think it is a very elitist thread throughout the media. In Connie Chung and the like we are really talking about people who are making millions of dollars, and they tend to view the news in a very elitist way. I think that is really a fair criticism.

Oliphant: Colman, what about the impact that this media culture, in terms of both content and technology, is having on the decisions that government makes? I want to get your views on that before we think about taking questions.

McCarthy: You saw it during the Gulf War just three years ago. A survey was made on how many experts the networks invited during the Gulf War for their analysis. Well, there were 838 experts and only one of those was from a major peace group that was against the war. So the press was cheerleading the slaughter of Iraqi women and children. Of course, we were hero worshipping Schwartzkopf and the generals and never realized who was being slaughtered by American bombs.

About six months after the war there were six Iraqi children brought to a hospital in Richmond, Virginia in the burn ward –

burned by American bombs. I checked the press pretty closely to see how many of those children were interviewed. They weren't interviewed at all. The press zeroed in on Somalia, that was the next war we were cheerleading. Oh yes, over there feeding the hungry. When you have the press asking the experts who support the U.S. war machine – 837 of these against only one opposed – you see that our power is not that we slant the news, but that we choose the news.

Oliphant: Let me ask you, Donald, since you spoke first and with considerable hope. After we have discussed this for a while, isn't there a point to be made that for all the increased access, for all the increased diversity, two things are perhaps going on? On the one hand there is an endless process of segmentation, so that every left-handed Lithuanian conservative can find a left-handed conservative newsletter or cable channel. But there is very little that is unifying, as Colman says. Media images are imposed on the public rather than reflecting true diversity of information and choices.

Lambro: No, I really disagree with that. I don't know how anyone can think that after the Congressional debate that was broadcast on all the channels over our decision whether to go into Kuwait to push out this invader; we heard both sides, every side, every conceivable argument that was made. A very dramatic moment in American history, really, the ultimate example of the town meeting and a nation watching and either agreeing or disagreeing, cheering for its side. The roll was called and they took the vote and we acted in a very unified way. There was something cathartic about it. You may not like the decision. We have had many wars where people did not like the decision, but that is how decisions are made in this country. If that isn't an example of a unifying moment in history through television, I don't know what is. I think in that sense and when we have great disasters like the Challenger, television can be a unifying technology that can bring the country together in a way that is quintessentially American.

Oliphant: If I can put it on you, Chris, all of this diversity, you used the modern term "feeding frenzy." What happened to the standards of journalism? Are they in any sense rigorous? Do they exist? Or is all this diversity masking a kind of lowest common denominator – all the bad stuff drives out the good?

Hitchens: Is it true that high tech journalism has led to a “feeding frenzy?” Is it also the case that we have abandoned the responsibility to substantiate our allegations? Normally questions like that arise because someone’s politician is being gored. As far as I can see, the Presidency has gone through three phases of that. First is the traditional, the way people like Franklin Roosevelt, or even Woodrow Wilson, was covered, which was with complete deference. The press was the microphone of the White House. As a journalist, you wrote what the President wanted printed in the paper that day. He gave it to you. If you noticed that he was in a wheel chair, you didn’t say so. If you noticed that he had had a stroke and his wife was running the White House, it was impolite to mention it. If you found there was a Mafia gun moll being smuggled into the back of the White House, you thought that probably people didn’t need to know that. That style of journalism, which was certainly not a feeding frenzy, went out with Mr. Nixon, I think.

Then there was a fashion for investigation, the Woodward and Bernstein fashion, very honorable in my view, and long overdue. Then, under Reagan the press went back to being the megaphone for the President, on bended knee. And during the Gulf War, whatever you think of the Congressional debate which after all was only between the Democratic and Republican parties, not much of a debate by anybody’s standards – the debate in the media was very poor. During the course of the war, the press was volunteering itself as the megaphone of the Defense Department. I was there, I saw them doing it. They actually asked the Pentagon what it wanted done.

Now there are some tentative signs again of muckraking coming back. And I think it is a bit early to say, but there are some signs that we are yet again learning that we are entitled to operate, and indeed must do so, on the presumption of guilt. The analogies drawn for the law don’t work for the press. We don’t have subpoena power, we can’t be judge, jury or executioner. More’s the pity, I sometimes think. This talk about trial by media is therefore phoney and the presumption of guilt is the right one upon which to operate, and usually, empirically, the most easily verified.

Oliphant: If I could just link the notion of substantiation and what Christopher, somewhat firmly, stated on the return of muckraking, it seems to me that there is quite a serious conflict. It does involve standards. My own view is that it is much easier to accuse in America today than it used to be, that there has been a subtle, and maybe not

so subtle, erosion of standards. You can get rumors into play that you couldn't do a generation ago, I mean as rumors. You can now raise questions without the requirement of answering them. These are changes from the standard when I first began as a reporter.

What about the impact of competitive pressures on the quality of information that American media convey.

McCarthy: It often happens right in the news room. Every news room in America has a few journalists who really want to get on, be scrappy, be aggressive, go after stories no one wants to pursue. But they often get opposition from their editors. "Calm down. Take it easy. You are always mad about something." So, those fellows tend to get worn out after a while. I hold them in very high esteem. They tend to be professionally angry but are personally gentle people. To keep up that anger and sense of justice is very hard to do when you have papers making enormous amounts of money, as many of them do.

Question: If I can pick up on the distinction you made between information and knowledge. It could be someday everyone will have access to raw stuff, news, but perhaps in that picture there may be no one to analyze a point of view. I wonder if you could think out loud with us about this, especially since Marvin Kalb said something like, "Try to imagine democracy without a free press," and of course, we've just heard a series of talks about Athenian democracy, where I am not sure there was a free press.

Oliphant: Donald, I want you to take it. But first I want to support the questioner. It astonishes me that I can come back to my office and see journalists whose responsibility involves writing about and covering Congress, sitting in the office with a notebook watching the Congress on C-SPAN.

Lambro: I think that, as long as information becomes regularly available and as it becomes more complicated, there will always be a need for people who can make sense of it. Human beings can absorb a lot of data. But one of the things we have done over many centuries is to go to people, or to pay people, to say, have you studied this? What does it mean? And what we are seeing is really a remarkable number of supplementals coming into the whole business. I was scanning the wire the other day. I saw something called the "Blumberg

News Report." I wasn't really familiar with it but it has appeared and it is there. It is on your screen and it is analyzing everything from Clinton's economic policy to the Middle East.

One interesting thing about the diversity we are going to be having, I think is that it will open up further access. We talked about on-line and newspapers. You will be able to call up a lot of stuff, a lot of which will be raw data. You will be able to go into your library and do Nexus searches. As to what was mentioned earlier about how the number of newspapers has shrunk, in Boston we used to have six or seven newspapers and now it is a two paper town.

It is going to be a lot cheaper for entrepreneurs with very small staffs to go on-line with electronic newspapers. So when you tune in to your daily newspaper on your visual display terminal you might be able to choose between two or three, or four or five "newspapers," or as many as the market will bear. I think that is all to the good. That provides diversity and a different point of view.

Question: I am interested in the truth, not in voluminous information. I am interested in doing your job, to really work at it, to really pursue it and to inform me and let me have an opinion and know that you are not out to get people, that you are not out to pronounce people guilty who may not be guilty, but to bring out the truth. I think that is also part of democracy.

Lambro: A very good point and you said it very well. This gets very messy and gets people angry. That is what democracy is, isn't it? We live in a world where there are a lot of nations rife with corruption from one end of government to the other. Decade after decade, century after century. Some of these countries do not have what we are complaining about here, this incredible diversity of information of which we complain there is too much. You take your choice. There is a buffet here of information and you choose what you want and what you rely on and what you consider truthful or not. But you have to make intelligent decisions. I think these choices have served us well over the years.

Oliphant: If I could follow up on the question and throw it at Christopher. I thought what I heard was a concern that, because of issues like standards, or substantiation, this great power has tended in recent years to undermine the institutions of our democracy rather than to help them function. Is that true?

Hitchens: Emphatically not. My criticism of the press is that it is far too lenient on public figures and especially on politicians. Much too lenient.

Oliphant: We can take one more.

Question: The question is, "What is the mission of the press?" Is the mission to disseminate the truth? Or is it to sell newspapers and thus get advertising?

Oliphant: The perfect concluding question and with some self editing let us go down murderer's row.

Hitchens: Well, one of the papers for which I write regularly, *The Nation*, never made any money and never will. We are open to take ads but no one ever places them with us. I am able to write more or less what I like. So it is a matter of whether the readers believe in my character, whether they want to take what I say on trust. There is hardly an editor check or fact check. The reader can take it or leave it. There I tend to say what I think, generally, about the low characters who I think have been and are running the Republic.

My other column, which appears in *Vanity Fair*, is intensely commercial. It cares desperately about advertising, has an enormous readership and looks at its ad figures even more closely. It is very much involved in the consumer society of cosmetics, fashion, style and so forth. It has the most meticulous attitude toward checking my facts and making sure that everything is not just factually impervious, but legally impervious before it is submitted to the readership. So, you can draw whatever conclusion you like.

McCarthy: Just briefly, I think that I have been living a fairly idyllic existence as a journalist. I write two columns a week. I can pretty well choose what I want to write about with very little interference from above and below. I try to write about things that some of the rest can't get to. I try to be a journalist who can use whatever skills I may have to decrease the suffering in the world. That is grandiose, perhaps, but I have had joy where things I have written have helped a few people get some food, get out of prison, maybe deal with some of the war mongers who were suppressing so many people around the world. I don't really want to change the world. I want to try to keep the world from changing me.

Lambro: Of course, the news media, whatever sector, has to make money to pay its bills. Anyone who wants to make a lot of money doesn't go into journalism but goes into business or becomes a lawyer. I got into this business because I wanted to put a little balance in the news media, to explore areas I didn't think the news media was exploring. I think journalists like Colman McCarthy and others get into journalism in order to right wrongs. There are things I am interested in: why government policies may have driven business out of inner cities, or how policies have made things bad for people, how they can be corrected, whether the money is being spent wisely.

But, after asking so many questions, the bottom line here is this messy thing called democracy and journalism. To find the truth you have to ask questions that sometimes politicians don't want anyone to ask. They are bothersome questions, they are troublesome and sometimes they may even be insulting. We try to be respectful but these are questions that you have to ask in a free society in order to get to the truth. There is no other way to ask them except to stand up on your hind legs and say, "Mr. President, Mr. Governor, Mr. Senator, my question to you is..." That may bother people who like one politician or dislike another, but I think on the whole it serves us well, because eventually we get to the truth more often than not and that leads to a resolution of the problem and, I think, a fairer society.

Oliphant: A moderator's prerogative. The only thing I can think to add is that I do worry about our standards and our ethics and the impact that a diminution of them could have on the quality of our national conversation, on the quality of our society. In conclusion, I think on behalf of all of us, I am at least grateful that there is no capital punishment in America for impiety and corrupting the youth. Thank you very much. 🍀

The Participants

Walter Robert Connor

Walter Robert Connor is President and director of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. He received his Ph.D. (1961) in Classics from Princeton University. He served on the faculty of Princeton University (1964-1989) as an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor, and was President of the American Philological Association (1987-1988). His many awards and honors include Phi Beta Kappa, Fulbright Fellow, Oxford (1956-57), the Howard Behrman Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Humanities (1986), and Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1992-). His books include *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens*, and *Thucydides*. His numerous scholarly articles have appeared in the *American Journal of Philology*, *Classical Journal*, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, and the *American Journal of Ancient History*.

Christopher Hitchens

Christopher Hitchens is a Contributing Editor for *Vanity Fair* and writes the magazine's "Cultural Elite" column each month. Mr. Hitchens began his writing career as a staff writer with the *New Statesman* magazine and then worked as an editorial writer for the *Evening Standard*. From 1977 to 1979 he worked for London's *Daily Express* as a foreign correspondent and then returned to the *New Statesman* as a foreign editor where he worked from 1979 to 1981. Other positions he held include columnist for *The Nation*, Washington editor for *Harpers* and the U.S. correspondent for *The Spectator* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. Mr. Hitchens is the author of numerous books including *Imperial Spoils: The Curious Case of the Parthenon Marbles*, *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger*, and *The Monarchy: A Critique of Britain's Favorite Fetish*.

Bernard M.W. Knox

Bernard Knox is Director Emeritus of the Center for Hellenic Studies where he served as Director (1961-1985). Dr. Knox received his Ph.D. (1958) in Classics from Yale University. He has received numerous awards including the award for literature from the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1967); the Spielvogel-Diamonstein award from PEN (1990); and the Frankel prize from the National

Endowment for Humanities (1990). He was also the NEH Jefferson Lecturer in 1992. He has authored many books including *Oedipus at Thebes*; *Oedipus the King*; *The Oldest Dead White European Male*; and *Backing into the Future, The Classical Tradition and its Renewal*; and is editor of *The Norton Book of Classical Literature*.

Donald Lambro

Donald Lambro, chief political correspondent of *The Washington Times*, is a nationally syndicated Washington columnist, author and radio commentator. His twice-weekly investigative column appears in newspapers from coast to coast. The author of five books on the government, his most recent book is *Land of Opportunity—The Entrepreneurial Spirit in America*, published by Little, Brown and Company. Before launching his column, Mr. Lambro was Washington correspondent for United Press International, covering Congress, the federal bureaucracy, and national politics. In addition to television appearances and speaking engagements, he has also written for numerous magazines and periodicals, including *Reader's Digest*, *Parade*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Review*, and *Barron's*.

Colman McCarthy

Colman McCarthy, a columnist with *The Washington Post Writers Group*, writes a twice weekly opinion column, commenting on subjects ranging from national politics to corporate ethics to family life. McCarthy began writing for the *Post* in 1968 and joined the *Writers Group* in 1977. The best of his columns and articles have been collected in three books, most recently *Journalist's Place in the World*. A popular lecturer across the nation, McCarthy is founder of the *Center for Teaching Peace* and volunteers his time to teach peace studies at several Washington-area schools and universities.

Marianne McDonald

Marianne McDonald is Adjunct Professor of theatre at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. McDonald received her Ph.D. (1975) in Classics from the University of California, Irvine. She founded the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* in 1972, a computer project which entered all of Greek literature up to 600 A.D. and has begun to enter the Byzantine period up to 1453. She has authored numerous articles, books, and reviews including her latest book *Ancient Sun, Modern Light: Greek Drama on the Modern Stage*. Her many awards include the University of California, Irvine Medal; Woman of

the Year, American Biographical Association (1990); and the Hypatia Award for Achievement from the Hellenic Association of University Women. She serves on many boards including: San Diego Woman's Newspaper, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage, and Library of America.

Thomas Oliphant

Thomas Oliphant is the Washington columnist for the Boston Globe and has been a correspondent for The Globe since 1968. He was one of three editors on special assignment who managed The Globe's day-to-day coverage of Boston's traumatic school desegregation which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1975. A frequent guest on television, he has appeared on the McNeil-Lehrer Report, Face the Nation, Inside Washington and Good Morning America. His account of the 1988 Presidential campaign, written with Christine Black, *All By Myself*, was published in 1989. Washingtonian Magazine named him one of the country's top ten political writers in 1988.

Robert W. Wallace

Robert Wallace is Associate Professor of Classics at Northwestern University. Dr. Wallace received his Ph.D. (1984) from Harvard University and has taught at Harvard, North Carolina State University, and Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *The Areopagus Council to 307 B.C.*, which was awarded the Gustave Arlt Award in the Humanities from the Council of Graduate Schools. He co-edited *HARMONIA MUNDI. Music and Philosophy in the Ancient World* and has written more than twenty-five articles on Greek history, culture and numismatics.

Gary Wills

Gary Wills is Adjunct Professor of History at Northwestern University. Dr. Wills received a Ph.D. (1961) in Classics from Yale University. He was Associate Professor of Classics and Adjunct Professor of Humanities at the Johns Hopkins University (1962-1980). He is the author of numerous books including *Reagan's America*, *Under God*, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, and *Certain Trumpets*. His many awards include the Pulitzer Prize for Literature, the National Books Critics Circle Award (twice), and the Peabody award for Excellence in Broadcasting (for writing and narrating the 1988 Frontline documentary, "The Candidates"). His articles appear frequently in the *New York Review of Books*. ♣

