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PEACE AND GENDERED AGRICULTURAL FESTIVALS IN ARISTOPHANES' *ACHARNIANS**



ABSTRACT: This essay calls for a re-evaluation of the image of Dikaiopolis as a selfish, hedonistic figure who stands in sharp contrast to the figures of Trygaios and Lysistrata. Underneath the veneer of self-centeredness and self-indulgence — which is enacted by Aristophanes in the interest of antiwar rhetoric — lies a figure who cares deeply for the well-being of agricultural land and the female-dominated fertility rites of Attica. In support of this argument I offer (a) an attentive re-reading of the Megarian scene (730-835) which features the bartering of two girls disguised as sacrificial piglets for the Mysteries, and (b) an equally close examination of the figure of Amphitheos. In the case of the former this entails focusing on the allusions being made to Demeter's agricultural fertility rituals such as the ritualistic *megara* (pits) with regard to the Thesmophoria festival, and the figure of Diocles (774) with regard to the Eleusinian Mysteries. In the case of the later this entails an analysis of his genealogy as it relates to Demeter's religious rites and Attica's ancestral founders.

1. INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN THE SEVENTH AND FOURTH century BC Greek literature depicted agrarianism as a “natural” and “just” occupation because it did not involve the exploitation of other people (Hanson 1999: 213). Hesiod, Xenophon, Plato, the author of the *Oeconomica*, Aristotle, Menander and Philemon depicted the agrarian lifestyle and ethos of *georgoi* (farmers) in a positive light (Hanson 1999: 214). Later day authors echoed some of those ancient sentiments with the most notable being Thomas Jefferson who argued that “the best possible society was one dominated by small, independent producers” (Kulikoff 1992: 148). In the Aristophanic corpus one notices a similar inclination to idealize agrarianism as an autarkic occupation and the *georgoi* as peace-loving yet courageous, independent yet communitarian types.

One such type is Dikaiopolis, the protagonist of the *Acharnians* who hails from the countryside and loathes the polis due to its lack of food

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security (στρυγῶν μὲν ἄστρῳ τὸν δ' ἐμὸν δῆμον ποθῶν, / ὅς οὐδέπ' ὥποτ' εἶπεν “ἄνθρακας πρίω”, / οὐκ “ὄξος”, οὐκ “ἔλαιον”, οὐδ' ἥδει “πρίω”, / ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἔφερε πάντα χῶ πρίων ἀπῆν, 33-6). Contrary to the majority of his co-patriots in the Assembly who were opposed negotiated peace talks, Dikaiopolis would gaze at the countryside from behind the city walls (where he and fellow farmers had taken refuge) and yearn for peace so he could return to his fields (ἀποβλέπων εἰς τὸν ἀγρὸν εἰρήνης ἐρῶν, 32). Not only did Dikaiopolis see the Peloponnesian War as detrimental to his agrarian way of life, he was also of the mind that Athens was partly responsible for the hostilities, an argument that he was willing to defend with his head on the chopping block (315-320). After failing to persuade his fellow citizens to undertake negotiated peace talks, a frustrated Dikaiopolis obtains a private peace treaty for him and his family, sets up a private agora in the parameters of his house, begins trading with people from former enemy states and begins celebrating the Rural Dionysian festival.

It is at this juncture that the moral character of Dikaiopolis comes into question with many scholars suggesting that Dikaiopolis is a selfish and hedonistic figure. Following comparisons to Trygaios and Lysistrata — two protagonists who achieve negotiated public peace treaties in the *Peace* (421 BC) and the eponymous *Lysistrata* (411 BC) respectively — Dikaiopolis is found lacking in altruistic sentiments. Dikaiopolis, it is argued, is a selfish figure who “escapes by magical means from his obligations as a citizen” (Dover 1972: 87-8). Other scholars go as far as to reject any etymological relationship between Dikaiopolis, whose name means “The Just Polis”, and the notion of justice. For example, Bowie argues that once Dikaiopolis embarks on his “private peace-project his interest in making Athens a just (or juster) polis evaporates... [the] implementation of his peace involves selfish *pleonexia* ... almost a polar opposite of *dikaiosyne* in his dealing with his fellow citizens” (1988: 183-85).

More sympathetic interpretations suggest that Dikaiopolis' decision to pursue a private peace treaty stemmed from pragmatism rather than selfishness, since it was the best that Dikaiopolis could manage under the circumstances (MacDowell 1983: 148). Two equally sympathetic interpretations (which I find myself nodding in agreement) are offered by Leo Strauss and Paul Ludwig. For Strauss it was Athens who was acting unjustly, not Dikaiopolis. The “city that prefers war to peace”, he writes (1966: 59), is “inherently unjust”.¹ According to the same author, since Dikaiopolis could not

1. Cf. Foley (1988) where the argument is made that Aristophanes is advocating treason.

“force the city to make peace” the most he could have done in order to be just was “to make peace for him alone” (ibid).² Another charitable, and yet distinct, interpretation by Ludwig (2007: 491) holds that Dikaiopolis was engaging in self-interested behavior but that self-interested behavior was related to just outcomes.

At the epicenter of the debate lies the so-called Megarian scene depicting the bartering of the two Megarian girls disguised as female piglets by their father. The girls, similar to all Megarians, were starving as a result of the Athenian imposed trade embargo. Rather than have them starve to death, their father trades them to an unsuspecting Dikaiopolis as sacrificial piglets for the Mysteries. Many, scholars assume that (a) Dikaiopolis is aware that he is receiving young girls, and (b) receives them with the intention of future sexual activity. For example, Strauss (1966: 71) writes that Dikaiopolis cares only for his personal pleasure when he obtains the two Megarian piglets for himself and does not share them with his wife, concluding that Dikaiopolis uses his private market “for his most private end.” Likewise, Ludwig (2007: 482) calls Dikaiopolis’ bartering of the Megarian piglets a “terrible transaction”. In similar vein, Forrest (1963: 6) suggests that Dikaiopolis was taking advantage of the Megarian’s unfortunate circumstances to engage in self-indulgence, and Compton-Engle (1999: 369) that Dikaiopolis swindled the Megarian “into selling his two daughters for some garlic and salt.” All of the above assume — in view of the many puns, polysemy and double-talk — that Dikaiopolis buys the piglets with the knowledge that they are young girls on the brink of sexual maturity.

However, what if Dikaiopolis was not aware of the ‘piglets’ true identity? Also, considering the fact that Dikaiopolis takes the piglets into his house (whereby the house was the domain of the wife) we have no evidence of the so-called non-sharing. What we know with certainty is that the Megarian claimed that he had sacrificial piglets for the Mysteries (*χοίρωσ ἐγώνργα μυστικάς*, 764) and Dikaiopolis barter them as such.

However, rather than focusing on Dikaiopolis’ awareness of the piglets true identity a better line of inquiry would be to re-read the Megarian passage in a methodical, interdisciplinary manner. This would mean paying

2. Interestingly enough, Strauss’s analysis resonates with interpretations of Aristophanes’ *Babylonians* (426 BC), a play that was performed the year before the *Acharnians* and which contained a harsh critique of Athenian imperialism (Murray 1964: 25). For a contrasting view see Norwood (1930) 9 who suggests that Aristophanes was not “bold enough” to voice such a critique at a time when Athens was “fighting to keep her empire” in the face of possible insurgents.

attention to the allusions being made to the *megara* (ritual pits) associated with the rituals of Demeter, followed by an analysis of Amphitheos' genealogy (45-50) as it relates to the Eleusinian Mysteries and the city-state of Megara. One of the underlying postulations in this analysis is that Aristophanes was enacting a rich orchestration of multiple symbolic systems in the service of an anti-war rhetoric.

2. THE MEGARIAN SCENE

After securing a private peace treaty Dikaiopolis establishes a private agora and begins bartering with people from former enemy states. With the exception of Dikaiopolis, everyone else is aware that the so-called Megarian “piglets” are prepubescent girls disguised as piglets by their father. The girls are famished and are willing to be sold as sacrificial piglets rather than die from starvation and are hence willing participants in this ruse (Sommerstein 1980: 194 n. 738; Orfanos 2006: 84-85).³ The bartering scene between Dikaiopolis and the Megarian reads as follows (vv. 763-96):⁴

- MEGARIAN: *χοίρωσ ἐγώνωγα μυστικάς* (I've got piggies for the Mysteries)
 DIKAIOPOLIS: *καλῶς λέγεις: ἐπίδειξον* (That's fine! Let's see them)
 MEGARIAN: *ἀλλὰ μὰν καλά. ἄντεινον αἱ λῆς: ὡς παχεῖα καὶ καλά* (Aren't they fine though? Have a feel, if you like. How plump and pretty she is!)
 DIKAIOPOLIS: *τοῦτι τί ἦν τὸ προᾶγμα;* (What's this supposed to be?)
 MEGARIAN: *χοῖρος ναὶ Δία.* (A piggy, by Zeus!)
 DIKAIOPOLIS: *τί λέγεις σὺ; ποδαπὴ δὴ 'στι χοῖρος;* (What are you talking about? What sort of piggy is this?)
 MEGARIAN: *Μεγαρικά. ἢ οὐ χοῖρός ἐσθ' ἄδ'?* (Megarian. Isn't this a piggy?)
 DIKAIOPOLIS: *οὐκ ἔμοιγε φαίνεται.* (It doesn't look like one to me.)
 MEGARIAN: [to the spectators] *οὐ δεινά; θᾶσθε τῶδε τὰς ἀπιστίας: οἷ φατι τάνδε χοῖρον εἶμεν.* (Isn't this awful? Look! The skepticism of the man! He says this isn't a piggy.) [Addressing Dikaiopolis] *ἀλλὰ μὰν, αἱ λῆς, περὶδον μοι περὶ θυμιτιδᾶν ἄλων, αἱ μὴ 'στιν οἶτος χοῖρος Ἑλλάνων νόμῳ.* (I tell you what: if you like, bet me some thyme-seasoned salt that this isn't a piggy, in the Greek sense.)
 DIKAIOPOLIS: *ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἀνθρώπου γε.* (All right, but it belongs to a human being.

3. On the suggestion that Aristophanes borrowed the idea of “selling one's own children to buy food” from the genre of Megarian comedy see Konstantakos (2012: 146).

4. Unless otherwise indicated all translations are from Henderson as found in the Loeb Classical Library editions.

MEGARIAN: *ναὶ τὸν Διοκλέα, ἐμά γα. τὸ δέ νιν εἶμεναι τίνος δοκεῖς;* (Yes, by Diocles; it belongs to me! Whose do you think it is? Would you like to hear it squeal?)

DIKAIOPOLIS: *νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς ἔγωγε.* (I certainly would.)

MEGARIAN: *φώνει δὴ τὸ ταχέως, χοιρίον. οὐ χρῆσθα; συγῆς, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀπολυμένα; πάλιν τν ἀποισῶ ναι τὸν Ἑρμῶν οἴκαδης.* (Sound off, then, little piggy. Right now. You won't? Damn you to perdition, you're keeping mum? By Hermes, I'll take you home again!)

FIRST GIRL: *κοὶ κοί.* (Oink! Oink!)

MEGARIAN: *αὐτα ἴσθι χοῖρος;* (Is that a piggy?)

DIKAIOPOLIS: *νῦν γε χοῖρος φαίνεται. ἀτὰρ ἐκτραφεῖς γε κύσθος ἔσται.* (It looks like a piggy now, but all grown up it'll be a pussy!)

MEGARIAN: *πέντ' ἐτῶν, σάφ' ἴσθι, ποττὰν ματέρ' εἰκασθήσεται.* (Rest assured, in five years she'll be just like her mother.)

DIKAIOPOLIS: *ἀλλ' οὐχί θύσιμός ἐστιν αὐτηγί.* (But this one isn't even suitable for sacrifice).⁵

MEGARIAN: *σὰ μάν; πᾶ δ' οὐκὶ θύσιμός ἐστι;* (Indeed? In what way unsuitable for sacrifice?)

DIKAIOPOLIS: *κέρκον οὐκ ἔχει.* (It's got no tail!)⁶

MEGARIAN: *νεαρά γάρ ἐστιν: ἀλλὰ δελφακονυμένα ἐξεῖ μεγάλην τε καὶ παχεῖαν κῆρυθράν* (She's still young, but when she's grown up to sowhood she'll get a big, fat pink one). [taking the other girl from the sack] *ἀλλ' αἰ τράφειν λῆς, ἄδε τοι χοῖρος καλὰ* (But if you want to rear one, here's a fine piggy for you).

DIKAIOPOLIS: *ὡς ξυγγενῆς ὁ κύσθος αὐτῆς θάτέρα.* (Why, this one's pussy is the twin of the other one's!)

MEGARIAN: *ὁμοματρία γάρ ἐστι κῆκ τῶνδ' τῶ πατρός.* (Sure, she's got the same mother and father). *αἰ δ' ἀμπαχνυθῆ ἀναχνοιωθηῆ τριχί, κάλλιστος ἔσται χοῖρος Ἀφροδίτα θύειν* (If she fills out and gets downy with hair, she'll be a very fine piggy to sacrifice to Aphrodite).

DIKAIOPOLIS: *ἀλλ' οὐχί χοῖρος τὰφροδίτη θύεται* (But a piggy isn't sacrificed to Aphrodite).

MEGARIAN: *οὐ χοῖρος Ἀφροδίτα; μόνα γα δαιμόνων* (A piggy not sacrificed to Aphrodite? Why, to her alone of deities!) *καὶ γίναται γα τᾶνδε τᾶν χοίρων*

5. At the risk of literal interpretation and the suspension of the multiple double entendres found in the text, it should be noted that neither the father nor the girls seem too concerned about their plan's sacrificial element. Is it because the probability of death by hunger is more near and real than that of sacrificial death, or is it because they are hoping eventually to escape by either running away or discarding their disguises? In either case, this appears to support the claim that in comedy, unlike in tragedy, death is absent (Morreall 1999: 15).

6. Kerkon: also slang for penis (Henderson 1998: 155 n. 97).

τὸ κοῦς ἄδιστον ἂν τὸν ὀδελὸν ἀμπεπαρμένον (What's more, the meat of these piggies is absolutely delicious when it's skewered on a spit).

We begin our analysis with a word on Aristophanes' dramaturgy. It is obvious that the Megarian is mimicking Dikaiopolis' *modus operandi* when the latter borrowed the costume of a beggar from the tragic poet Euripides in order to deceive the Acharnian Chorus (410-17). "For the beggar must I seem to be today", Dikaiopolis confides to Euripides, "to be who I am, yet seem not so. The audience (*theatas*) must know me for who I am, but the Chorus must stand there like simpletons, so that with my pointed phrases I can give them the long finger" (440-4). Dikaiopolis comes out as a simpleton in the eyes of the audience because they know something he does not: the piglets are not really piglets, they are girls. Their insider knowledge and resultant feelings of pleasure in their (Hobbesian comic) superiority leads to laughter. Indeed, one of the time-honoured methods of generating audience-laughter is via the character of the fool.⁷ Turning our attention to the allusions being made with regard to Demeter's rites, we noticed the following: First, it has been noted that Aristophanes makes use of an unusual verbal manifestation of the word *megara* such as the peculiar verb *megarizo* that has gone fairly unnoticed because it was assumed that it referred to the city of Megara (Lippman 2006). The *megara* were pits or chasms into which women threw various religious offerings such as dough-shaped human genitalia and sacrificial piglets, as part of the Thesmophoria rites (Dillon 2002: 110-120; Zeitlin 1982: 129-132). According to Detienne (1989: 134) the sacrificial piglets were thrown into the pits alive because women were disallowed from the performance of blood sacrifice. Similar to the Eleusinian Mysteries this fertility festival commemorated Demeter's grief over the kidnapping of her daughter to Hades. The Thesmophoria was celebrated during *Pyanepsion*, a month also known as Demetrios (Dillon 2002: 110-1; Simon 1983: 18). The same festival was exclusive to married women and was financed by wealthy male citizens (Zeitlin 1982: 132). The first day of the festival consisted of the *Anodos* (Ascent) when the women would walk to the *Thesmophorion*, the second day of the *Nēsteia* (Fasting), and the third of the *Kalligeneia* (Good or Fair Birth). During the *Nēsteia* women who had abstained from food and sex for three days would descend into the *megara* to retrieve the remains of sacrificial piglets placed there at an earlier time (Versnel 1992: 39; Chlup

7. Despite or because of the fact that, according to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1788, 40), the "most difficult character in comedy is that of the fool" for "he must be no simpleton that plays that part".

2007). These remains were taken to altars and mixed with seeds before being scattered into agricultural fields in the hope of abundant crops, *εὐφορίαν*. Although snakes were found in the *megara* (often feeding on the carcasses of the piglets), they were welcomed because they were considered the guardians of the *megara* and fertility creatures in possession of healing powers.⁸ Put differently, the scholarly consensus is that the Thesmophoria was a religious fertility rite involving magic in the form of agrarian rituals.⁹

Secondly, the Megarian passage is linked to the Thesmophoria on account of its level and type of obscenity. For example, the punning *aischrologia* (abusive/obscene language, scurrilous joking) observed in the Megarian passage is reminiscent of the ritual *aischrologia* and *loidoria* (outraged talk) that the Attic women engaged in during the festival of the Thesmophoria (Brufield 1996).

Thirdly, the figure of Diocles to whom the Megarian swears — *ναὶ τὸν Διοκλέα* (774) — is also associated with the Thesmophoria. To explain, Diocles is mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* as being one of the first men to be taught by Demeter her mysteries (vv. 473-79):

Then she [Demeter] went, and to the kings who deal justice, Triptolemus and Diocles, the horse-driver, [475] and to doughty Eumolpus and Celeus, leader of the people, she showed the conduct of her rites and taught them all her mysteries, to Triptolemus and Polyxeinus and Diocles also — awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice.

How do we know that Aristophanes was not alluding to another Diocles, namely, the one mentioned in Theocritus' *Idyll*? That Diocles was said to have hailed from Attica, was killed in a battle at Megara while protecting his *eromenos*, was buried at Megara, and was honored by the Megarians in the form of a "kissing" contest every spring.¹⁰ Indeed, Henderson is of the mind

8. On the topic of Thesmophoria see Deubner (1932); Nilsson (1952); Burkert (1985) 244; Clinton (1992) & (1996); Osborne (1993); Habash (1997); Detienne (1998); Dillon (2002); Faraone (2011); Austin and Olson (2004); Parker (2005).

9. Scholars holding this view include: Deubner (1932) 51; Nilsson (1952) 91; Burkert (1985) 244; Clinton (1996) 112; and Parker (2005) 275. This interpretation was disputed by Lowe (1998), but was rebuked by Stallsmith (2009).

10. Cf. Theocritus *Idyll* 12, 28: "Nisaeans Megarians, oarsmen supreme, may you live in prosperity because you greatly honored the stranger from Attica, Diocles the lover of boys. Always at the beginning of spring the lads gather round his tomb and compete for the prize in kissing; and whoever most sweetly presses lips on lips goes home to his mother loaded

that Aristophanes had in mind Diocles the Hero, for he writes: “A Megarian hero who had an annual festival there” (1998: 153 n. 96). It would seem to me that, given the text’s ambiguity, there is no clear answer. That being stated, the figure of Diocles the Hero is every bit suitable for the *Acharnians*’ anti-war message. As an Athenian being worshiped by Megarians, Diocles was a rare individual — a common figure linking the two warring city-states.

Fourthly, we should not forget that Dikaiopolis’ first act upon receiving the private peace treaty was the celebration of the Rural Dionysia (202). The Rural Dionysia (*Dionysia ta kat’ agrous*) was designed to promote and encourage the “fertility of the autumn-sown seed” (Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 42–43) that was planted during the Thesmophoria. This, I argue, should be seen as further evidence of Dikaiopolis’ goodwill towards a gendered agrarianism.¹¹

Finally, Bremmer (2014) highlights numerous symbolic links between the city-state of Megara, the figure of Demeter, her cult worship, and the *megara* (pits). For instance, he points out that Demeter used to be one of the most important divinities at Megara. Not only was she associated with the foundation of Megara, but according to local folk etymology the city took its name from Demeter’s sanctuaries, the “Megara”. Bremmer’s alternative exegesis for the city’s etymology adds further credence to our hypothesis that Aristophanes was seeking to establish a positive association between Dikaiopolis and the agrarian fertility festivals. This argument receives further support by François Chamoux’s Budé commentary connecting the name of Megara with the verb *megarizein* which is translated as “performing the chamber rite”.¹²

2.1 Demeter the Lawgiver

Having argued that the Megarian passage is imbued with allusions to the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Thesmophoria the ensuing question is what, if any, was the authorial intention. To begin, a word on the etymology of this

with garlands” (*Νισαῖοι Μεγαρήες, ἀριστεύοντες ἐρετμοῖς, δλβιοι οἰκείοιτε, τὸν Ἀττικὸν ὡς περὶ ἄλλα ξείνων ἐτιμήσασθε, Διοκλέα τὸν φιλόπαιδα. αἰεὶ οἱ περὶ τύμβον ἀλλέες εἶασι πρότω κοῦροι ἐριθμαίνουσι φιλήματος ἄκρα φέρεσθαι. ὅς δέ κε προσμάξῃ γλυκερότερα χεῖλεσι χεῖλη, βριθόμενος στεφάνοισιν ἐὼν ἐς μητέρ’ ἀπῆλθεν*).

11. That Dikaiopolis shows considerable concern for the well-being of the Attic festivals, from his own (private) celebration of the Rural Dionysia to his participation in the Choes day of the *Anthesteria*, is undeniable. Of course one could point out that Dikaiopolis does not show the same level of concern for the women-only festivals for Demeter such as the *Skira* and *Haloa*, but that would be to ignore the fact that Aristophanes treats the *Skira* festival extensively in another one of his comedies, the *Ekklesiazousai*.
12. Chamoux as quoted in Bremmer (2014) 168.

fertility festival. Thesmo-phoria derives its name from Demeter the Thesmophoros (the Lawgiver). The term *thesmos* was indicative of a law of divine origin (akin to “natural law”) and was distinct from the term *nomos*, which indicated man-made conventional law (Stallsmith 2008: 123).

Provided that the physical location of the *Thesmophorion* was at the hillside of the Pnyx and thus adjacent to the Athenian Assembly, the Athenian men held their meeting at an alternative location if it coincided with the Thesmophoria.¹³ The alternative location was the Theatre of Dionysus. In other words, the “men’s political business was displaced by the women’s higher duties to Demeter and her grain” (Burkert 1985: 194; Håland 2008: 41). Put differently, the well-being of agricultural land took precedent over deliberations about warfare in the male-exclusive Assembly. The abandonment of agricultural land, first by Pericles and later by his political successors (Cleon, etc.), was anathema because the Athenians were not simply engaging in a novel and innovative war strategy but they were ignoring ancestral (female) wisdom and leaving themselves vulnerable to starvation in the event of a naval blockade.

Hence, Aristophanes, similar to tragic poets, was raising questions about the “fundamental assumptions underlying political life by introducing women” into his writings (Saxonhouse 1986: 403). Granted that the *Acharnians* does not give women a central role in the polis the way *Lysistrata* and the *Assemblywomen* do, nonetheless, a feminine spirit permeates the Megarian passage.

Moreover, despite his numerous sexual puns Dikaiopolis gives no indication— either in speech or action— that he intends to use the piglets for his personal satisfaction. Dikaiopolis takes the piglets into his wife’s domain, the house (814), and we do not hear from them again. Is it possible that by obtaining the necessary sacraments for the liturgies (i.e., sacrificial piglets) Dikaiopolis was symbolically meeting the responsibilities of the male-administered polis? If this is correct it would corroborate the argument that Dikaiopolis “mimics not an individual but a state” and therefore must be understood as “being not a citizen but a symbolic micropolis” (Moorton 1999: 36-7).

13. It should be noted that the physical location of the Thesmophorion in Athens is a matter of debate. Thompson (1936) asserts that the Thesmophorion was located on the Pnyx hill. Broneer (1942) 250 points out that excavations in the area “failed to reveal any clear evidence of the cult”, and Clinton (1996) 117-120 holds that the location of the Thesmophorion on the Pnyx hill might have been a comic invention on the part of Aristophanes.

2.2 Figs, Eros and Political *Orgē*

Even if we were to adapt a literal reading of the Megarian passage, it becomes clear that Dikaiopolis was the one who got swindled—not only did he lose his garlic and salt, he ended up with two extra hungry mouths in his household with a taste for dried figs *ἰσχάδας* (*ischadas*) (802–5). Not without significance, figs are laden with erotic and iretic symbolism. According to Allen (2000, 160–164), who analyzes the trope of figs within the intersection of anger and sexuality with specific reference to sycophancy, the erotic element stems from the figs’ symbolism with the female genitalia. In the context of the *Acharnians* this symbolism is evident by the various terms used in reference to the Megarian girls-disguised-as piglets. These include: *χοίρωος* (764), *χοῖρος* (767), *χοῖρον* (771), and *χοιρίον* (777). In the particular case of *χοῖρος*, it is a double entendre denoting the notion of both ‘piglet’ and the *prudenda muliebria* (hairless vulva) of prepubescent girls.¹⁴ The erotic element of the *ischadas* is to be found in the peddling of the “piglets” as sacrifices for the Mysteries, *χοίρωος ἐγόνυγα μυστικῶς* (764). The Eleusinian Mysteries, as we know, were secret religious rites which focused “on fertility, both agricultural and human” (Cosmopoulos 2015, 12) and as part of the same rites suckling pigs were sacrificed by the initiands (Henderson 1998: 147 n. 95).

Where is the iretic element of the *ischadas* to be found? To begin, Allen (2000) makes reference to the term “iretic” (read: ire) within the context of translating the word *orgē* which is commonly translated as “anger”. The emotion of anger dominates the early scenes of the *Acharnians* (e.g., the anger of the Acharnian Chorus at Dikaiopolis for signing a private peace treaty with the Spartans, 280–324). The same anger re-emerges when a sycophant (*συκοφάντης*) enters Dikaiopolis’ private agora and attempts to expose the Megarian piglets as contraband (*τὰ χοιρίδια τοίνυν ἐγὼ φανῶ ταδί*, 819). Apart from the relevant etymology of sycophant — a “revealer of figs” — this further highlights the rich, interwoven symbolism of Aristophanes’ text. For example, Dikaiopolis drives off the sycophant from his agora (824–6) while the Megarian compares sycophants to a curse (*οἶον τὸ κακὸν ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις τοῦτ’ ἔνι*, 830). For the above to become intelligible we need to keep in mind Allen’s argument that sycophants had a fondness for making enemies [*philapechthemosune*] because they tended to violate “the economy of desire by

14. For a discussion of the double entendres see Dover (1972) 63–65; Sommerstein (1980) 194–196; Henderson (1991) 60–61, 118–119, 123, 128, 131–132; Olson (2002) 261, 267–274; de Cremoux (2005) 125–130 and Konstantakos (2012) 135–137.

initiating processes of anger when the time or situation” was not appropriate (Allen, 2000, 164-165).¹⁵ In reference to the Megarian passage we need to keep in mind Dikaiopolis’ apology to the Megarian (following the latter’s laceration with the Athenian sycophant). “If I was being meddlesome,” he says “let it be on my head” (*πολυπραγμοσύνη νυν ἐς κεφαλὴν τράποιτ’ ἐμοί*, 833). The word *πολυπραγμοσύνη* (*polupragmosunē*) is translated by Henderson (1998) as “meddlesome”, that is to say, with a negative connotation. That negative connotation, in turn, arose from the common criticism that Athenians interfered in the affairs of other city-states (Henderson 1998: 161 n.102).

The significance of this word becomes evident when we critically examine an earlier passage whereby Dikaiopolis assigns blame for the Peloponnesian War on the elements of *epithumetikon* and *thumetikon* (to use Platonic terminology). According to Dikaiopolis the trouble began when some Athenian sycophants began exposing Megarian goods. According to him:

some trouble-making excuses for men, misminted, worthless, brummagem, and foreign-made...began denouncing the Megarians’ little cloaks. If anywhere they spotted a cucumber or a bunny, or a piglet or some garlic or rock salt, these were “Megarian” and sold off the very same day.¹⁶ Now granted, this was trivial and strictly local. But then some tipsy, cottabus-playing youths went to Megara and kidnapped the whore Simaetha. And then the Megarians, garlic-stung by their distress, in retaliation stole a couple of Aspasia’s whores, and from that the onset of war broke forth upon all the Greeks: from three sluts! And then in wrath (*orgē*) Pericles, that Olympian, did lighten and thunder and stir up Greece, and started making laws worded like drinking songs, that Megarians should abide neither on land nor in market nor on sea nor on shore.¹⁷ Whereupon the Megarians starving by degrees,¹⁸ asked the Lakedaimonians to bring about a reversal of the

15. Allen is quoting Isocrates (15.134).

16. Henderson informs us that Dikaiopolis is probably alluding to the suspicion that they [Megarian goods] were probably imported without the payment of duties (1998: 121 n. 67).

17. One suggestion holds that Aristophanes is parodying a sympotic song of the time: “O blind Plutus, you ought not to show yourself either on land, or sea, or on the continent, but remain in Tartarus and Acheron; for men suffer every kind of evil through you.” If this is the case, the implication is that the Megarian Decree “in effect banished the Megarians to Hades, having declared land, sea, agora, and, for good measure, heaven itself, off limits” (Legon 1981).

18. Was Aristophanes exaggerating the economic impact of the embargo? The Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1994) defines “exaggeration” as nothing more than the magnification beyond truth meaning that at the root of every exaggeration is some

degree in response to the sluts; but we refused, though they asked us many times. And then there was clashing of the shields. Someone will say: “they shouldn’t have!” But tell me, what should they have? Look, if some Lakedaemonian had denounced and sold a Seriphian puppy imported in a row-boat, would you have sat quietly by in your abodes? (515-540)

Apart from providing a comic, and hence laughter-generating, exegesis to the origins of the Peloponnesian War, and apart from poking fun at Herodotus’ discussion of “woman-stealing” as the basis of the Trojan and Persian Wars (*Hist.* 1.1-4) Dikaiopolis was attacking (the now-dead) Pericles via his mistress, Aspasia. In addition, Dikaiopolis was targeting Pericles’ nephew, Alcibiades, via Simathea, his lover.¹⁹ Why did Dikaiopolis take a jibe at the young Alcibiades? With visions of military glory Alcibiades was probably exhibiting signs that he would ‘mature’ into a pro-war figure (which he eventually did). Considering Dikaiopolis’ earlier assertion that he was going to “revile” all the war rhetoricians (38) his gibes towards Alcibiades are not surprising.

2.3 Pericles’ *ischadas*

Turning to Dikaiopolis’ attack of Pericles, apart from the slander involving Aspasia, it is interesting to note Dikaiopolis’ utilization of the word *orgē* to describe Pericles’ reaction to the Megarian crisis. Returning to Allen’s argument that sycophants tended to make enemies because they violated “the economy of desire by initiating processes of anger when the time or situation” was not appropriate (2000: 164-165), one could argue that that was the basis of Dikaiopolis’ criticism. That is to say, Dikaiopolis was of the mind that the war could have been avoided if Pericles had adapted a more conciliatory tone during the negotiating talks with the Spartans.²⁰ The syc-

truth. Thus, while the Megarians might not have been on the verge of death, they were nonetheless suffering. On the Athenians’ repeated refusals to lift the economic embargo see Thucydides (1.139-146).

19. Legon (1981) 205 disputes the possibility that Simathea was a historical figure while Henderson suggests that Simathea was Alcibiades’ lover which, if true, would have added significantly to the caustic nature of Dikaiopolis’ joke by implying that uncle and nephew alike were associated with sluts (1998: 121 n. 69).
20. According to Kagan (2003) 352, the economic embargo against Megara was intended to punish the Megarians for helping the Corinthians in the Battle of Sybota (a naval battle between Corinth and Corcyra in 433) and to “issue a warning to them and to any other friends of Corinth to stay out of the affair.” In hindsight, Kagan continues, Pericles’ action was unnecessary because “Sparta seemed to be exercising a restraining

phant that seeks to cause trouble for the Aristophanic Megarian in some ways resembles Pericles' angry and uncompromising stance towards the city-state of Megara. Pericles' *orgē* (alongside with his miscalculation of internal Spartan politics) led to war.²¹ Pericles persuaded the Athenian voters to avoid making concessions to Sparta and reassured them that his city-based defense strategy — whereby the countryside was abandoned to the mercy of the enemy forces — was the optimal strategy. While Thucydides praised Pericles' plan as the best under the circumstances it should not be forgotten that with the exception of the Persian invasion Athenian hoplites were not accustomed to sitting idly by while invading forces destroyed their agricultural lands. That land held the means to their subsistence, their sacred hearths and private shrines, and was the place of their rural festivals and fertility cults (Ober 1985: 174). Indeed, it cannot be overemphasized that Pericles' military strategy was not only original but revolutionary because it went against the Greek's ingrained propensity for agonal combat and territorial defense (Ober 1985: 173). So ingrained was the tendency of the hoplites to defend their *agroī* that King Archidamos and his fellow Spartans specifically targeted the Acharnai deme²² on account of its youthful male population and its large constituency of 3,000 hoplites (Thuc. 2.20), certain that they would provoke a counterattack (Thuc. 2.11). Archidamos was proven correct and the enraged Acharnians begun demanding a counterattack that was only averted by Pericles' refusal to summon any sort of "assembly or special meeting of the people, fearing that any general discussion would result

hand on most of her allies." More decisively, the decree "had a very serious effect on the internal politics of Sparta" because it gave the impression that Athens was attacking a Spartan ally without any provocation and it "reinforced the impression of Athens as a tyrant and aggressor", something that played directly into the hands of the Spartan war party. Had Pericles' judgement been better, argues Kagan, and had the Athenian irritation with the Megarians been less, he might have taken a gentler tone, avoided provocative actions, and allowed the friends of Athens and peace to keep their control of Spartan policy" (ibid). Had Pericles rescinded at the request of the second Spartan embassy war would *not* have broken out. It was in this respect, continues Kagan, that "the enemies of Pericles were right" in fixing on the Megarian Decree the cause of the war and Pericles as its instigator (ibid). As for the Megarian embargo, Moorton (1999: 535-40) is of the mind that Aristophanes was advocating its lifting (a reasonable claim supported by textual evidence).

21. One of Kagan's (1969) main arguments is that Pericles underestimated the strength of the Spartan war party (i.e., the Ephors) and overestimated the strength of the Spartan peace party (i.e., King Archidamos).
22. Aristophanes' *Acharnians* is named after the Acharnians, the male citizens of the Acharnai deme.

in wrong decisions made under the influence of anger rather than reason” (Thuc. 2.21–2) followed by his appeals to his rural contingents to think of their land as “a little kitchen garden”.²³ According to Kagan (1969: 352) if Pericles had rescinded at the request of the second Spartan embassy, the Peloponnesian War could have been avoided. Ironically enough the Athenians lost the Peloponnesian War because — as Dikaiopolis correctly and prophetically predicted in the opening lines of the play — a city has no food security. When the Spartan admiral, Lysander, cut off Athens’ grain supply the Athenians found themselves starving.²⁴

At a higher but more immediate level of interpretation, Aristophanes presents to his rural audience two versions of the same event.²⁵ In the first version, the historical one, the Athenians voted to refuse the lifting of the Megarian embargo based on Pericles’ advice. What ensued was war, misery and death (i.e., Athenian Plague). In the second, dramatic version, Dikaiopolis obtains a private peace treaty and resumes friendly trade relations with Megara and Boeotia. What ensues is joy and festivities. Only warmongers are excluded from Dikaiopolis’ (image-)nation; a young Bride (unlike her warrior husband) is allowed to enjoy the benefits of peace (1048–1068). It is at this junction that Nussbaum’s argument, namely, that Dikaiopolis is the “anti-type” of male aggressiveness, a man who enjoys and values his family and religious celebrations and who embodies the energy of comedy which is conceived in terms of a “soft, sneaky, talky, humanity” (2005: 156) resonates most heavily with the play’s anti-war rhetoric. In the final analysis, the implied rhetorical message to the theatre audience is this: if you wish to live as Dikaiopolis reject War (Polemos) and embrace Peace (Eirene).

23. Interestingly enough this was not the first time that Pericles had sought to implement a city-based defense strategy. In 446–444 BC he had attempted the same strategy but failed due to considerable resistance from the rural population (Kagan 2010: 53). Pericles was successful the second time around following an iconographic propaganda depicting ancestral heroes fighting near city-walls with the implication being that Athenians would not be shaming themselves by following the same strategy. Prior to this time the only gods associated with city-fortifications were Apollo (the god of reason) and Poseidon (the god of sea) (Ober 1985: 175–6).

24. The defeat of the Athenian navy at the Battle of the Aegospotami meant a blocked shipping route to the Black Sea, the place from which Athens received her grain supply. On Athenian fear upon hearing of the defeat see Xenophon’s *Hellenica* 2.2.1

25. The *Acharnians* was performed at the Rural Dionysia and hence in the countryside during the winter solstice when there was no fear of a Spartan raid.

3. WHO WAS AMPHITHEOS?

Last but not least, we turn our attention to the figure of Amphitheos as it relates to Demeter's religious festivals. Amphitheos (Divine on Both Sides of the Family) is the figure who enters the Athenian Assembly and claims that the gods had commissioned him to negotiate a peace treaty (45–55). While the haughty *Prytaneis* (Assembly Presidents) reject him (56), Dikaiopolis entrusts him with the task of negotiating a private peace treaty for him and his family (130–134). What is of particular interest about Amphitheos is his purported lineage which he traces to the goddess Demeter and to the ancestral royal Attic founders. Asked to explain his identity he claims that: “Amphitheos was son of Demeter and Triptolemus, and to him was born Keleos, and Keleos married Phaenarete (Appearing-Virtue) my grandmother, of whom Lykinos was born, and being his son I am immortal” (45–50).

For the most part Amphitheos' ancestral claims have been ignored or dismissed. Dismissive arguments range in scope from the assertion that Amphitheos' elaborate genealogy is “a hit at Euripides and his fondness for such details” (Walcot 1971: 43), to the claim that the first half of the passage is “pure invention” and the other half “pure confusion” (Sommerstein 1982, 160), to the assertion that Amphitheos' ancestry is nothing more than “mangled Eleusinian genealogy to be taken as preposterous, even deranged” (Henderson 1998: 61 n. 10) to the contention that Amphitheos is simply one of the many fictional deities invented by Aristophanes.²⁶ Is Amphitheos a product of Aristophanes' fantastical poesis? While there is no harm in contemplating such a question it would be a mistake if one does not transcend beyond such an inquiry. For example, it is obvious that what is of importance is the fact that Amphitheos' fictitious ancestry appears to be a well thought-out feature and an integral part of the play's plot. For the sake of clarity I depict Amphitheos' genealogy in the following linear descendant chart.



The reader will notice that only some of the names follow the established order of naming-customs whereby firstborns are named after their paternal grandfathers (Thompson 2007: 678).²⁷ One possible explanation could

26. On a wider scale the reflection of a broader mocking attitude in Old Comedy towards the onslaught of imported new cults and deities in Athens (Allan 2004: 127).

27. Phaenarete is a compound word consisting of the words *Phaen-* (appears) and *arête* (vir-

be that the figures under question were not firstborns. With or without this onomastic anomaly the continuation in generations is unmistakable as is the implied link between Amphytheos and Attic agriculture (Bowie 1993: 21). Amphytheos is a direct descendant of Demeter and Triptolemos.²⁸

What symbolism was Aristophanes seeking to convey? At one level of interpretation Amphytheos' rejection by a pro-war Assembly (54–5) is a rejection of peace. At a deeper level of interpretation however, Amphytheos' rejection is a rejection of Demeter, of Attic agriculture, and of Attica's ancestral founders. With regard to the latter argument, I would ask the reader to contemplate Athenian autochthony myths. Unlike other Hellenic groups, the Attic people considered themselves to have sprung from the Attic soil and thus prided themselves on their indigenous status.²⁹ According to their foundational myths, the same was true of their forefathers, Aktaios, the first king of Attica, and Kekrops the first king of Athens. Kekrops had an added layer of earth-symbolism attached to his persona because he was half-man, half-snake (recall the sacred snakes that were found inside the *megara*). Not surprisingly many of the major Athenian religious figures such as Athena (olive tree),³⁰ Demeter (grain) and Dionysus (vine) had strong ties to agriculture and the Attic people honoured them with major festivals such as the Great and Lesser Panathenaea, the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Thesmophoria and the Rural Dionysia.

Alternatively, and as Grethlein (2010: 143) perceptively points out, mythic history played an important role in anti-war diplomacy because it constituted “important argumentative capital”. In support of this argument

tue). Likewise, Aristophanes is a compound name consisting of the words *Aristos* (best) and *phanes* (appearing). That being said, one would be hard pressed to prove a link.

28. Griffith (1974: 367-369) also suggests a historical connection with the Eleusinian mysteries by drawing a comparison with the figure of Hipponikos whose family held a hereditary office in the Eleusinian mysteries and were also hereditary consuls (*προξενοί*) of Sparta at Athens. Hipponikos also names Triptolemos as an ancestor. Equally interesting is the suggestion that the figure of Triptolemos “became part of a dynamic new Eleusinian propaganda” and was “used by the Athenian state solely for its own benefit” (Mitsopoulou 2010: 296).
29. The use and abuse of autochthone myths in Attica is beyond the scope of this paper, but for those who wish to delve deeper Loraux (2000), Lape (2010) and Kennedy et al. (2013) are recommended.
30. With regard to Athena, especially telling was her worship on account of her gift, the olive tree. The *Olea europaea* was of major agricultural importance on account of its fine wood, leaves, fruit and oil which was used for cooking and lighting, to say nothing of its agronomic value as a trading commodity. The same tree was a symbol of peace while its sacredness and exclusivity to Attica are attested by Herodotus (*Hist.* 5.82.1).

he quotes Callias' argument for peace at Sparta in 371 BC, which I quote here in full due to its relevance.³¹ It reads:

The right course, indeed, would have been for us not to take up arms against one another in the beginning, since the tradition is that the first strangers to whom Triptolemus, our ancestor, revealed the mystic rites of Demeter and Core were Heracles, your state's founder, and the Dioscuri, your citizens; and further, that it was upon Peloponnesus that he first bestowed the seed of Demeter's fruit.

At another level of interpretation, interestingly, albeit not surprisingly, Aristophanes also uses the figure of Amphitheos to criticize Pericles. By depicting Dikaiopolis as a god-fearing man who signs a peace treaty and thus obeys the will of the gods Aristophanes places Dikaiopolis in sharp contrast to the figure of Pericles. The historical Pericles, we are told, never "mentioned the Olympians in his funeral oration. The fallen Athenians had died on the battlefield not in order to obey the will of the gods, but because they wanted to impose their own will on the other Greeks" (Graziosi 2014: 62). Indeed, if one were to associate the statement made above to Dikaiopolis' rhetoric simile of Pericles as Zeus (*Acharn.* 530) what emerges is a critique of Pericles as an autocratic leader and Athens as a democracy only in name (*Thuc.* 2.65.9).

4. CONCLUSION

In *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, Nussbaum points out that in the opening scene of the *Acharnians* Dikaiopolis engages in undignified bodily activities (e.g., farting), but also in contemplative activities (e.g., "wondering" (ἀποροῶ), "writing" (γράφω) and "constructing arguments") which carry democratic attributes (2014: 273). It is those democratic features of his character that prevent Dikaiopolis from obtaining a public peace when none was wanted by the Athenians in 425 BC. Had he obtained a public peace treaty, he would have been acting (at best) in a paternalistic manner and (at worse) in a tyrannical fashion. Neither is Dikaiopolis an Athenian traitor. Given the fantastical nature of Old Comedy Aristophanes could have easily transported Dikaiopolis in a Cloud-Cuckoo-Land.³² Instead,

31 Quoting Xenophon's *Hellenica* 6.3.6.

32. A possible objection to this line of argumentation could be that we are not entitled to simply evaluate characters as if they were real people and thereby speculate about

Aristophanes depicts Dikaiopolis staying in Attica and defending his private peace before a Chorus of angry Acharnians in a setting that is reminiscent of a court (cf. Plato's *Apology*).³³ Under the "persuade or obey" doctrine Dikaiopolis offers an *apologia* that justifies his disobedience (Kraut 1987: 75; Weiss 1998: 162) thereby displaying both voluntary conformity and participation in a democratic polity (Murphy 1997: 117; Zumbrunnen 2004; 2006: 319). Following his successful defense (i.e., he splits the once-unified Acharnian Chorus) Dikaiopolis constructs an alternative political space in the form of his private agora and begins a political *epideixis* (demonstration) of his political acumen — adherence to ancestral rituals and friendly trading relations with neighboring city-states (719–21).

None of the above indicates that the Acharnians is an "escapist fantasy" (Forrest 1963: 1-12; Carey: 263), or that Dikaiopolis' "private agora" involves a "de-politicization" process (Ludwig 2002: 64–5). Rather, they are indicative of Dikaiopolis' political desires and hatreds. Dikaiopolis desires the agros but hates the astu (urban area) because the former is self-sustainable while the latter is not (34–5). The urban space, unlike the rural space, is incapable of producing agricultural goods. The farmers can survive without the townspeople, but the townspeople cannot survive without the farmers. Dikaiopolis' act of obtaining the Megarian piglets for the Mysteries is in all likelihood a symbolic act aimed towards the well-being of the agricultural land. From the Thesmophoria which were exclusive to women and aimed at the promotion of human and agricultural fertility, to the Eleusinian Mysteries, which was open to both sexes and held the promise of immortality after death (Zeitlin 1996: 10), the Acharnians alludes to both. In the spirit of his patron-god, the androgynous Dionysus, Aristophanes prides himself as

possibilities never raised in the play, e.g., "why Aristophanes didn't have Dikaiopolis simply flee the city?" In my defense (and apart from the fact that such a censure is reminiscent of criticism leveled against Shakespearean literary critics such as William Hazlitt, Andrew C. Bradley (2013) and Maurice Morgan, for the "erroneous critical practice of analyzing" characters as if they were real people Bradley 2010, 83), I would reply that: (a) political comedy is highly topical, and (b) insofar as the *Acharnians* is a political comedy it also falls under the jurisdiction of political theory where speculative questions are not only legitimate but encouraged.

33. Part of Dikaiopolis' apology entails a criticism of Pericles' unjust treatment of Megara, a Dorian city-state and a Spartan ally. Dikaiopolis' speech divides the once-unified pro-war Chorus of the Acharnians into pro-war and anti-war factions (557–571). The ensuing division in the body politic allows Dikaiopolis to escape death at the hands of the First Semichorus because the Second Semichorus becomes Dikaiopolis' self-appointed bodyguard (564–5). At the "metatheatrical" level (for a lack of a better term) the allusion to Athens' similar dichotomy between pro-war and anti-war factions is unmistakable.

a “civic educator” (Frost 2014: 1). In that capacity the Acharnians seeks to reorient the polis toward its rural roots and away from imperialism, injustice and war (Henrichs 1990; Xanthou 2010: 311). The traditional family farm was the wellspring from which democratic Athens sprung. When Athens lost touch with those economic and moral roots it collapsed (Hanson 1999).

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