

LEGAL REFORMS AND DYSTOPIAN DISCOURSE BETWEEN THE  
ANCIENT AND MODERN WORLD: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
POLITICAL CHANGE, LAW, AND RHETORIC

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the significance of political change, law, and rhetoric in imaginary cities that feature animals and women as ‘Others.’ It studies dramatic and philosophical texts, from Aeschylean tragedy, Aristophanic comedy, and Platonic dialogue in ancient Greece to modern works, including Thomas More’s *Utopia* in 16<sup>th</sup>-century England and the utopias and dystopias of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, in order to offer a discourse between the ancient and modern world. I demonstrate that each of these texts can be compared on a rhetorical and jurisprudential level, which allows us to examine how different characters engage with different forms of power in a setting which at least begins by being democratic. This enables us to trace the development of this strand of Western political thought over the last two thousand years, and to confront intractable political problems that recur throughout time. This confrontation helps us understand patterns of legal reforms and rhetoric and demonstrates that the concerns of Aristophanes and Plato can also be found in modern paradigms. The recourse to the utopian and dystopian fantastic, the seemingly apolitical animal world, and the differently organised female sphere, offers new insight into the activities of law-making, city-planning, and rhetoric, both in antiquity and today.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. Thomas More's *Utopia*

I begin this thesis by examining the political and juridical problems addressed in Thomas More's *Utopia*. Although Thompson argues that *Utopia* is essentially "Morean, for it is unique,"<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to focus on More's text because of its versatility: it is Lucianic, Vespuccian, and Swiftian in some ways, but it is also Aeschylean, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Plutarchan in other ways. More importantly, it is also Aristophanic – as I will demonstrate below, More's satirical approach to solving political and legal problems in *Utopia* recalls that of Aristophanes, who frequently toys with Athens and its institutions with comic verve only to restore them in one way or another at the end of the play. A comparable approach, though less comic, can also be found in many Platonic dialogues, for example in the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Statesman* – three dialogues which systematically interrogate the vacillating human activity of law-making and polity-planning. Furthermore, *Utopia* is rich in political and legal imagery, which reflects that of both ancient Greece and Rome, from Aeschylus to Aristotle to Cicero, and eventually Plutarch and Lucian – it thus expresses part of the Greek and Roman legacy to western culture and literature.<sup>2</sup>

This is why I disagree with Thompson, because while *Utopia* is definitely 'Morean' (More is the author, after all), there is also a literary connection between his text and others, which should not be ignored. Especially, the array of classical references in *Utopia* echoes Lucian's presentation of *Verae Historiae* "as an *ainigma*, a riddle or a series of veiled

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson 1974: xlix.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Brock 2013: xi.

references which hint at something else.”<sup>3</sup> By presenting it that way, Ní Mheallaigh writes, “Lucian invites the reader [and More does the same] to interpret every detail in it as a sign which points towards *other* texts. In this way, the fictional travel-narrative offers, for the scholarly reader...an intellectual journey through the literature of the past.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, More’s text recalls the notion found in Lucian’s *A teacher of rhetoric* 9, namely that in order “to achieve true culture, the scholar must emulate classical authors literally by following in their footsteps.”<sup>5</sup> By presenting works full of classical imagery, both Lucian and More remind the reader, “in a surreally literal way, that they are following in the footsteps of the literary giants of the past.”<sup>6</sup>

Like Greek and Roman political and legal imagery, which “is largely drawn from experience,”<sup>7</sup> the imagery in *Utopia* echoes that of the past and the present. For example, More’s use of the ship of state metaphor recalls that of Aeschylus and Plato, and the allusions to the working class who suffer from the restraints the absolute monarch puts on them brings to mind problems of More’s own time. Furthermore, like Aristophanes, who enriches this imagery with intertextual allusions in order to make a particular point about Athenian politicians, orators, or the demos, More includes similar references in order to scrutinise the political and legal issues he experiences in sixteenth-century England.

At the same time, while certainly influenced by ancient sources, I argue that the political and juridical problems interrogated in *Utopia*, as well as the (satirical) answers offered to solve them, can be readily compared with modern political thought and

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<sup>3</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 207. Cf. Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 116.

<sup>4</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 207-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 209.

<sup>6</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 210. Cf. Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 174. See *VH* 1.2, ‘my readers will be attracted not only by the novelty of the subject...but also by the humorous allusions in every part of my story to various poets, historians, and philosophers of former times...’

<sup>7</sup> Brock 2013: xii.

jurisprudence in turn. This becomes especially clear when examining the utopian and dystopian writings of H.G. Wells,<sup>8</sup> George Orwell,<sup>9</sup> and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.<sup>10</sup> As I will

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<sup>8</sup> H.G. Wells did not receive the same classical training as Orwell later would but he was nonetheless well read. Sherborne 2010: 175, notes: “Wells champions both large-scale readings of history such as his old favourite, Carlyle’s *French Revolution*, and explications of social values in the forms of Utopias such as those of Plato and More.” Indeed, “while scholars regarded Plato’s philosophy as speculative and theoretical, for Wells it was virtually a manifesto,” mainly because of Plato’s idea of what a just society would look like. “It would still be a class society, but exceptionally gifted children from the lower class would be secretly admitted to...the Guardians. The appeal to Wells [who grew up in poverty] of this meritorious notion is obvious.” (Sherborne 2010: 50).

Furthermore, “one consequence of Wells’ constant engagement with the writings of his contemporaries, and his conscientious reading of classics, is that his own fiction is informed by a strong sense of kinship to and dissent from other authors. His work is highly ‘intertextual’, imitating and parodying other books, as well as making explicit references to them.” (Sherborne 2010: 101). For example, *The Time Machine* refers to lost ancient civilizations, such as those of the Greeks and the Phoenicians; it alludes to Oedipus encountering the riddle of the Sphinx; and it incorporates references to the Golden Age in general. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* meanwhile alludes, among others, “to a range of sources including Swift, Kipling, Shakespeare, Mary Shelley, Darwin and the Bible.” (Sherborne 2010: 101). This is a significant piece of information for the comparative literary approach that underpins this thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Orwell was educated at St. Cyprian’s and Eton and thus deeply immersed in the classical tradition. As he writes in *As I Please* in 1944: “...I am old enough to have been educated at a time when Latin and Greek were only escapable with great difficulty, while ‘English’ was hardly regarded as a school subject at all.” However, even though he “disparaged classics as a snobbish and useless relic of a more benighted age,” it is clear that he is influenced by it. (Burton 2005: 53). Especially, Aristophanes seems to influence Orwell, and he praises him for his ‘brutality and coarseness.’ Specifically, in *Funny, but not Vulgar*, he asserts, “that you cannot be memorably funny without at *some point* raising topics which the rich, the powerful and the complacent would prefer to see left alone.” This becomes especially clear “if one draws in the English humourists of earlier ages – for instance, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Swift and the picaresque novelists, Smollett, Fielding and Sterne.” It becomes even clearer, Orwell asserts, “if one considers foreign writers, both ancient and modern – for example, Aristophanes, Voltaire, Rabelais, Boccaccio and Cervantes.” He says:

All of these writers are remarkable for their brutality and coarseness. People are tossed in blankets, they fall through cucumber frames, they are hidden in washing baskets, [and] and they rob, lie, swindle, and are caught out in every conceivable humiliating situation. And all great humorous writers show a willingness to attack the beliefs and the virtues on which society necessarily rests.

A year later, Orwell refers to Aristophanes in *Why I Write* and, recounting his school days, remarks: “Apart from school work, I wrote *vers d’occasion*, semi-comic poems which I could turn out at what now seems to me astonishing speed—at fourteen I wrote a whole rhyming

demonstrate in this thesis, these texts share a connective way of thinking and I illuminate this by transporting themes from the ancient Greek authors mentioned earlier (specifically, Aristophanes and Plato) to modern literature, using Thomas More as the starting point. Specifically, I argue that, looking at the ways in which these texts can be analysed through a comparative reading, especially on a rhetorical and juridical level, allows us to examine how different characters respond to, and engage with, different forms of power in a setting which at least begins by being democratic.

I wish to address explicitly that the methodological approach that supports this entire thesis and my reading of the texts from different periods, is a comparative literary approach with historical underpinnings. This is *not* an analysis dealing with historical receptions of one text within another, but a comparative study that connects texts across time and space to

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play, in imitation of Aristophanes, in about a week...” This is notable praise from someone who, two years prior, had gleefully noted, “Classical education is going down the drain at last...” In addition to admiring the humour of Aristophanes, “Orwell also had a taste for the dialogues of Plato. Contemporaries at Eton were struck by [his] Socratic style of argumentation.” (Burton 2005: 70). There are also several references to classical authors in his novels: he mentions various Greeks, Romans, and ancient civilizations in *Coming Up for Air* (such as Horace, the Mycenaeans, and the Phoenicians), refers to Aristophanes again in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, and the society depicted in *1984* bears certain hierarchical features, which recall those of the *Republic*. Despite Orwell’s disdain for the classics, it is clear that there are similar ideas in their works and his; and this is important information for the comparative analysis presented in this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> In regards to Gilman’s knowledge of classics and ancient history, “she enrolled for three years in the early 1880s in the Society to Encourage Studies at Home [a distance learning programme]” where [she] studied ancient history, the ancient Hebrews, and Egypt.” (Davis 2010: 58-9). In her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, she compares herself to Socrates, because “[I] worked for various reforms, as Socrates went to war when Athens needed his services, but we do not remember him as a soldier. My business was to find out what ailed society, and how most easily and naturally to improve it.” (Gilman 1935: 182). She also mentions him when she talks about her mother who refused “all manner of invitations for [her]... [but she] found it saved emotion to ‘fight fire with fire’...and, strengthened by Emerson, Socrates, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, [she] became a genuine stoic.” (Gilman 1935: 51). Moreover, she recognises the Tuscans, the Greeks, the Etruscans, and the Vandals when quoting from a newspaper article, which ridicules and criticizes girls going to college. (Gilman 1935: 62). Furthermore, her novel *Herland* can be compared to Herodotus and several versions of the Amazon myth, which continues to show that there are similar ideas in her writings and Greek and Roman literature.

provide a trans-chronological exploration of the history of legal and political thought. The original contribution to knowledge my research has to make is, in my view, a comparative literary analysis that makes a case for the importance of studies of literature in the *longue durée* for enhancing our understanding of legal reforms, political thought and discourse between the ancient and modern world. It enables us to confront intractable political and juridical problems that consistently recur throughout time.

The choice of texts used for this undertaking stems from both interests of originality and pragmatic concerns for scope and word-capacity. It may be rather provocative to some readers that several obvious and influential sources of ancient utopian thought have been left out, such as Euhemerus who claims to have travelled to the legendary island of Panchaea, somewhere in the Ocean off Arabia, Iambulus who ‘wrote a long account of the wonders of the great ocean,’<sup>11</sup> or Zeno and his idea of the perfect community. Likewise, while I mention several aspects of Plato’s *Rep.* and *Laws*, I do not give them their own sections in this thesis. This is due to reasons related to the intended originality and theme of this project, as much ink indeed has been spilled on the *Rep.* and its influence on utopian thought from antiquity (and its resemblance to Aristophanes’ *Eccl.*). I would really like to lay that debate on one side and concentrate instead on more animated and satirical philosophic drama, because it fits in with the serio-comic tune of this thesis.

I do not discuss Lucian much even though he is, as is very well known, much more important for More than Aristophanes (cf. pp. 9-14). The requirement to adhere to a specific word-limit is one of the reasons: if I had unlimited space at my disposal, I would consider generously several of Lucian’s works, and not only *VH* which would be the first obvious choice, but also *Prometheus* (and its sophistic imagery), *Tyrannicide* (and the implications of

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<sup>11</sup> *VH* 1.3.

the court case) or *Menippus* (and the satiric degree voted for by souls in the underworld) to name just a few. Yet, I have chosen to discuss Aristophanes in detail instead, both because of interests in original contribution and because I think it is fruitful to consider how More and Aristophanes match.

*Utopia*, as acknowledged above, is riddled with references to both authors from the past and topical allusions to the world of the audience. It is no secret that More's interplay of the imaginative world of the characters with the real world of the audience echoes that of Lucian in *VH*. However, it is also no secret that these metafictional and topical games go back much further than Lucian since they are also one of the backbones of Old Comedy, a fact Lucian himself recognises.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Lucian himself addresses Aristophanes' important position in the realm of authors who aligned themselves with the imaginative and metafictional genre. This is why, I think, it is worth considering the similar ideas in Aristophanes and More, because while Lucian may have influenced More in many important respects, Aristophanes' fantastic voyages on the theatrical stage and allusions to contemporary Athens were a vital source for Lucian's metafictional consciousness. He exploits the strategies of Aristophanes for his own literary pursuits, and shows a profound understanding of the subtleties of satire and nuances of Old Comedy, as he places his writings within an Old Comic tradition.

It thus seems to me that Aristophanes can convincingly be used as one of the main authors in this thesis, because going back to one of the earlier genres of satire enriches not only our literary understanding of *Utopia*, but also the comparative literary approach that

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, *Double Indictment*, 33 and *Against the Uneducated Book-collector* 27. See also Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 174, Slater 2016: 15-18, and Rosen 2016, esp. 143-4 and 153-7. For a useful appendix listing Aristophanes and other fifth-century comic playwrights mentioned in Lucian, see Sidwell 2000: 151-2.

underpins my reading of these texts from different periods and their sophisticated principles of combining great wisdom with delightful entertainment.<sup>13</sup>

As a final justification of my methodological approach, I would like to draw attention to the present, because it is clear that in the current world we live, the powers and limitations of speech, and questionable political and juridical practices, are under ever increasing scrutiny. A critical analysis of how the rhetorical games and (satirical) legal reforms seen in ancient Greek comedy and philosophical treatises can be compared with elements of modern political thought and jurisprudence—and connecting them with the righteous mockery and verbal dexterity seen in *More in the process*—is therefore very timely and seems to me to be worth pursuing.

In my critical approach I also bear in mind that the rebellious mood of the present, and the feeling that revolution is in the air once again, is matched with opportune anniversaries of upheavals and social commentaries in the past. Specifically, 2016 – a year full of political turmoil that clearly showed that the concerns of Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, More and their descendants can also be found in modern paradigms – marked the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of More's *Utopia* and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wells' birthday. 2017, meanwhile, marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation, the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Swift's birthday, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, the centennial of the Russian Revolution, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Che Guevara's death. It is not hard to

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<sup>13</sup> This is, perhaps, further accentuated by the fact that Aristophanes, too, can be found in the library of the Utopians: 'among the poets they have Aristophanes, Homer and Euripides, together with Sophocles in the small typeface of the Aldine edition' (*Utopia*, 80). Aldus Manutius published the first printed edition of Aristophanes (with exception of *Lys.* and *Thesm.*) in 1498, only a few years before *Utopia* was published. The inclusion of the *editio princeps* of Aristophanes shows further that *Utopia* points towards *many* other texts, as it portrays its literary (and satiric) heritage not just by following in the footsteps of Lucian and other later writers, but also in those of some of the greatest poets of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Greece.

find parallels between the political upheavals presented in Aristophanes and More, and the rebellious temperament of our time, which these anniversaries only accentuate.

The discussion below, which focuses on both the serio-comic legal structure of the Utopian society and the role rhetoric and juridical concerns play in the rationale for setting it up that way, paves the way towards the dialogue presented in this thesis. As is so often the case, it is worth looking at this through the lens of the ‘Other.’ It is clear that More utilises a (satirical) humanist approach and looks at the topic through the lens of the victims of tyranny and unjust applications of the law. Aristophanes, meanwhile, often turns to animals and female characters in times of crisis and at moments of foundation and revolution. This is also true for utopian and dystopian writers of the twentieth-century. Especially, as I demonstrate in this dissertation, it is the pairing of the ‘Other’ with a (satirical) travel theme, or recourse to another world, which can be witnessed in More and Swift (who express ideas similar to those of Aristophanes, Lucian, and Herodotus), that is also present in the writings of Wells, Orwell, and Gilman.

Additionally, the mixture of realism with fantasy, the wise with the foolish, and the tragic with the ridiculous, is the literary style which informs both the ancient and the modern texts. It shapes not only the comedies of Aristophanes and the philosophical thought experiments of Socrates, but also the tales of *Utopia* and *Gulliver’s Travels*, as well as the utopian and dystopian fantasies found in writings of the twentieth-century, such as *The Time Machine*, *Animal Farm*, and *Herland*, published in 1895, 1945, and 1915, respectively.

## II. The serio-comic nature of *Utopia*

In 1506, Thomas More sent a letter to Thomas Ruthall in which he praised Lucian's ability to "[reprimand and censure], with very honest and at the same time very entertaining wit, our human frailties."<sup>14</sup> It is clear that More is influenced by Lucian's technique in refraining "from the arrogant pronouncements of the philosophers as well as from the wanton wiles of the poets,"<sup>15</sup> when writing *Utopia*. Indeed, like Lucian in *Verae Historiae*, More presents an entertaining travelogue, which satirically reflects on the political and legal problems of his time. There is a reference to Lucian in *Utopia* which underlines this further because the Utopians are, according to Raphael Hythloday "delighted with the witty persiflage of Lucian."<sup>16</sup> Certainly, it is not only the Utopians who are delighted by the writings of Lucian but More himself is too, which becomes especially clear when looking at the satirical and adventurous aspects of his narrative style.<sup>17</sup>

More importantly, as already suggested above, More appears to endorse Lucian's method of presenting "dramatically, through dialogue, what he wants us to see and to think about. He praises, because he values, this *literary* mode of moral teaching, a mode utilizing satire and irony but not malevolence."<sup>18</sup> Logan asserts likewise:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thompson 1974: 3. Cf. *VH* 1.1-2. Lucian, in turn, praises Eupolis and Aristophanes, who are "formidable men for attacking what's grand and laughing at what's right." (δεινούς ἄνδρας ἐπικερτομήσαι τὰ σεμνὰ καὶ γλευάσαι τὰ ὀρθῶς ἔχοντα). *Double Indictment* 33.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson 1974: 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Utopia*, 80.

<sup>17</sup> Lucian in turn seems to have written *VH* "in imitation of other notoriously mendacious travel-narratives, such as the works of Herodotus, Ctesias, Iambulus and the tales of Homer's Odysseus whom he identifies as the 'pioneer and teacher of such nonsense' (*VH* 1.3)." Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 207. Cf. Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 211-2.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson 1974: xlii-xliii. Cf. Carroll 1996: 251. "*Encomium moriae* and *Utopia* both reflect [Erasmus' and More's] Lucianic inspiration by enlightening readers about the need for moral and political reform." Furthermore, despite the controversy that surrounds Polybius' ambitions as a moral historian (he has been dismissed as "Machiavellian – that is, as someone who rendered judgment on human conduct by employing the utterly practical and even amoral standard of success or failure"), he has also been presented as someone who aims "at both the

In the view of More and Erasmus [a contemporary of More with whom he translated many of Lucian's writings]...Lucian was a satirist of devastating effectiveness whose targets richly deserved striking, and his works provided (as also for Rabelais and Swift) invaluable models for pungent and wide-ranging social criticism.

The reference to Jonathan Swift is important because it continues to show that *Utopia*, much like Lucian's *Verae Historiae*, Amerigo Vespucci's *New World* and *The First Four Voyages of Amerigo Vespucci*, and indeed Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, belongs to the literature of (satirical) exploration.<sup>20</sup> Especially, the descriptions of foreign customs, paired with a sense of humour and enticing narrative art that can be found in *Utopia*, suggest, as Swift also says of Gulliver's travel writing, "an air of truth apparent through the whole."<sup>21</sup> "These," as Thompson asserts, "are qualities present also in Lucian's sketches and tales, and could have taught More some of the techniques and strategems he uses so aptly in *Utopia*."<sup>22</sup> Dorsch argues similarly: "Swift reproduced much of the method and spirit of *The True History*, and of the spirit at least of the *Menippus*, in *Gulliver's Travels*; and these...are the method and the

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practical but also the moral instruction of his readers." Eckstein 1995: 1 and 19. For instance, at 39.6, Polybius praises the Roman general Mummius for his conduct, which had been moderate and unsullied even though he had great opportunities and power in Greece. See also Walbank 1956-1979.

<sup>19</sup> Logan 2016: xxiii.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Sylvester 1968: 275. The link to Vespucci (and Swift) is also evident in More's presentation of Hythloday who "being eager to see the world...left to his brothers the patrimony to which he was entitled at home...and joined Amerigo Vespucci. He was Vespucci's constant companion on the last three of his four voyages, accounts of which are now common reading everywhere, but on the last voyage did not return home with him...After Vespucci's departure he travelled through many countries with five companions from the garrison." *Utopia*, 10. One of those countries was Utopia and after spending some time there, Hythloday returns home to Antwerp to tell his friends about the remarkable things he encountered on the island. See also Traugott, who notes, "More's *Utopia* appeared only a decade after Americus's *Four Voyages*. Plato, Ulysses, Americus, Hythloday – they were all one to More." Traugott 1961: 554.

<sup>21</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson 1974: xlix.

spirit also of Book II of More's *Utopia*."<sup>23</sup> This is also evident when looking at the opening pages of the second book: much like some of the beginnings seen in Lucian and Swift, they begin with a detailed description of the topographical features of the faraway island that is Utopia. In this way, it is clear that, like Lucian's Isle of the Blest and Swift's society of the Houyhnhnms, Utopia is isolated and set apart from the known world, which continues to underline its fantastic and exploratory aspects.

In this way, *Utopia* can thus be characterised as Lucianic, and, anachronistically, as Swiftian as well. However, it is important to note that it is also Platonic and Aristotelian and, more importantly, Plutarchan in other ways. Indeed, many features of More's approach bring to mind those seen in the writings of classical political thought. This, then, places him among those works as well and not exclusively among satire and travel-writing. In the most recent edition of *Utopia*, Logan states:<sup>24</sup>

The first part of [More's] book's title – 'On the Best State of a Commonwealth' – serves to identify it as belonging to the most celebrated species of classical political writing: a tradition of works, inaugurated by Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* and continued in one segment of Aristotle's *Politics* (and subsequently in many other works), that embody their authors' views on the form and rationale of the best conceivable polity.

It is clear that Logan situates *Utopia* within other political exercises, seen especially in Greek texts, on how to create the best commonwealth. He asserts that More takes many of the political, legal, and social arrangements of Utopia from Platonic dialogues, Aristotelian treatises, and also "from idealised accounts of historical polities and their lawgivers by such

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<sup>23</sup> Dorsch 1966-7: 349. See Traugott 1961: 536, who writes, "...both *Utopia* and *Gulliver's Travels* are discoveries of the moral and spiritual reality of utopia in our everyday lives, and to this end employ as a satiric device a voyager who is maddened by a glimpse of the reality of the Good in a fantastic land and of the unreality of everyday life in real England." See Traugott 1961 and Rielly 1992 for discussions of the connections between Thomas More and Jonathan Swift.

<sup>24</sup> Logan 2016: xviii.

authors as Tacitus and, especially, Plutarch.”<sup>25</sup> The reference to Plutarch here is important and deserves further attention. In the second book of *Utopia*, when Hythloday itemizes and describes the library of the Utopians, he says, “they are very fond of Plutarch’s writings.”<sup>26</sup> Hythloday does not specify which Plutarchan writings the Utopians are fond of in particular but, as will become clear, they almost certainly include the *Parallel Lives*, especially *Life of Lycurgus*, from which More seems to draw on more than one occasion when writing *Utopia*.<sup>27</sup>

This double focus on political philosophy and (satirical) travel narrative is already made clear in the full title of the book, which affirms that *Utopia* concerns both ‘the best state of a commonwealth’ and ‘the new island of Utopia.’ The subtitle demonstrates this further: ‘A Truly Golden Handbook, No Less Beneficial than Entertaining.’ This recalls More’s fond expression of Lucian’s ability to reprimand honestly, yet entertainingly, human weaknesses, in the letter quoted earlier. It also suggests that More’s work is beneficial in that it may lead the reader to question problematic aspects of sixteenth-century England, but it is amusing at the same time because it offers a witty satire on the existing situation.<sup>28</sup> In this vein, More offers a Lucianic episode, where “the real world of the reader imprints itself upon the work of

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<sup>25</sup> Logan 2016: xxviii. Certainly, *Republic* is not the only Platonic text that comes to mind here, as the description of Magnesia in the *Laws* and the myth of Atlantis in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* are just as applicable.

<sup>26</sup> *Utopia*, 80.

<sup>27</sup> See Schoeck 1956: 369, who notes, “More, we may be certain, knew his Plutarch well...in the *Epigrams* there are many ideas and sentiments which seem to echo rather closely many of the concepts to be found in the *Lives* and the *Moralia*.” Schoeck mentions the *Epigrams* but it is clear that *Utopia* also echoes many Plutarchan concepts. More is not the only writer of his time who is influenced by Plutarch but many of his contemporaries are as well, such as George Cavendish, Nicholas Harpsfield, and William Roper. On the influence of Plutarch on English writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Mossman 2007.

<sup>28</sup> The satirical aspect is further underlined by More himself in the preface to the work in which he expresses his worries to Peter Giles about different types of readers some of whom may not respond positively to his text. He writes, “...and there’s [a man] so insipid of taste that he can’t endure the salt a little wit” and others are “so flat-nosed that they dread satire as a man bitten by a rabid dog dreads water...” See *Utopia*, 6.

fiction – and the fictional world of the book absorbs and dramatizes the world of the reader.”<sup>29</sup> By including this dual notion so early on, the title of *Utopia*, like the prologue of *VH*, “appeals up front to scholarly readers and demands to be read at *more* than one level.”<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the title and subtitle of the work, the etymology of Raphael Hythloday’s name also stresses the double focus and serio-comic nature of *Utopia*. For his first name, Raphael, is of Hebrew origin and means ‘healer from God.’ His last name, Hythloday, however, is rooted in ancient Greek (specifically, ὕθλος plus either δαίω or δάιος or ὀδάω)<sup>31</sup> and means ‘speaker of nonsense.’<sup>32</sup> Thus, while Hythloday can be seen as a clever healer, or guide, from God who advises on the problems of commonwealths based on what he has experienced in other countries, he can also be interpreted as a comic figure who entertains his listeners by telling nonsensical tales of his journeys to exotic and faraway places. The satirical aspect of his name is underlined further in his exchange with the character ‘More’ in Book I of *Utopia*, whose name is similar to the Greek μωρός. The audience witnesses a dialogue between a fool and a speaker of nonsense at the beginning of the work – and the Lucianic attribute of this is only accentuated by the fact that “Hythloday’s advice is dismissed as

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<sup>29</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 144.

<sup>30</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 116.

<sup>31</sup> ὕθλος means ‘idle talk or non-sense’ δαίω ‘distribute,’ δάιος here means ‘knowing or cunning,’ and ὀδάω ‘export and sell.’

<sup>32</sup> Wegemer 1995: 134. See also Sylvester 1968: 283 and Baker-Smith 2011: 144. Wooden argues, “...in the dual use of [Hythloday’s] satiric persona, More is able to have it both ways, to agree and disagree, to laugh at and commend Hythloday’s various attacks on European society and praise of Utopian institutions. The technique is a favorite among Lucianic satirists, perhaps the most famous non-classical example being Swift’s Gulliver.” Wooden 1977: 43.

On Swift, Wooden notes: “In Swift’s satire the apparently judicious and rational discourse of the benevolent humanitarian sets out to correct social ills not much different from those Hythloday discussed in Book I through the implementation of another theoretically conceived plan. In both cases the evils and abuses deprecated by the satiric persona did indeed exist; but the remedies proposed are more radical, impractical, and destructive than the evils they are intended to cure.” Wooden 1977: 43 n. 25.

nonsense by a *moros*.”<sup>33</sup> At the same time, like Hythloday’s name, the name of ‘More’ also bears serious connotations. As is the case with Lucian in *VH*, More is ‘both author and diegetic character,’<sup>34</sup> and his ‘real’ name has the ability to “pull the narrative towards the referential pole of the reading-spectrum which is occupied by genres such as historiography which are generally read as ‘true’ in their references to the extra-diegetic world shared by reader and author.”<sup>35</sup>

In this manner, it becomes clear that *Utopia* is not merely a post-Platonic or post-Aristotelian political exercise on how to fashion the best government, but much more complex than that. Certainly, despite the ostensible dichotomy of the double focus of the book, it is worth combining the two interpretations mentioned above, especially keeping in mind Plutarch’s and Lucian’s influence on More. In this way, I suggest that we can characterize *Utopia* as a Lucianic travelogue, which is shaped by a Plutarchan sense of political philosophy in many important respects. Specifically, it appears that More appropriates a style of Plutarchan political philosophy in a Lucianic travel narrative, which does echo ideas of other creations of the best commonwealths (and might thus be ‘beneficial’ to the reader), but at the same time it also emerges as an ‘entertaining’ satire on the Europe of More’s time.

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<sup>33</sup> Nelson 2001: 891. The creation of a character that bears the same name is also Lucianic. In *VH*, Lucian creates “an *alter ego*, Lucian the narrator, who may lie with Odysseus-like abandon, whilst Lucian the author remains free from blame.” Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 173. (As Ní Mheallaigh points out, this is also Homeric).

<sup>34</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2009: 20.

<sup>35</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 175.

### III. The political and legal structure of Utopia

The fundamental premise of Utopia is *autarkeia*: the best commonwealth, according to More, includes everything that is vital to ensure its citizens' happiness (and excludes everything that contributes to their unhappiness), and nothing else. This premise, that one must first determine what constitutes the happiest life for the citizens in order to found the ideal commonwealth, recalls *Republic* 369b. There, Socrates says to Adeimantus, γίνεται τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, πόλις, ὡς ἐγῶμαι, ἐπειδὴ τυγχάνει ἡμῶν ἕκαστος οὐκ αὐτάρκης, ἀλλὰ πολλῶν ὧν ἐνδεής: ἢ τίς οἶε ἀρχὴν ἄλλην πόλιν οἰκίζειν; ("I think a city comes to be because none of us is self-sufficient, but we all need many things. Do you think that a city is founded on any other principle?). Adeimantus replies, οὐδεμίαν ("No.").<sup>36</sup> It also echoes Aristotle's approach in *Politics* 1323a20 when he asserts that when inquiring about the best form of state (πολιτείας ἀρίστης), one must first define the conditions for "the most generally eligible life, and then whether the same life is or is not best for the state and for individuals." (διὸ δεῖ πρῶτον ὁμολογεῖσθαι τίς ὁ πᾶσιν ὡς εἰπεῖν αἰρετώτατος βίος, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο πότερον κοινῇ καὶ χωρὶς ὁ αὐτὸς ἢ ἕτερος). The answer to this essential question, i.e. what constitutes the happiest life for the individual citizen in a state, is the starting point of political theory; and the question itself is a central aspect of ethical theory relating to the foundation of the state.<sup>37</sup>

Two striking features of More's constitution of happiness in Utopia are that there are only a few laws, and no lawyers. The rationale for this recalls many of the problems that we

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<sup>36</sup> The use of οὐδεμίαν (or, οὐδεὶς) suggests that Adeimantus' 'No' is rather emphatic, as it means 'not a single one' or 'none whatever.' A similar use of the word appears in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 927 when Euripides says that not one thing Aeschylus said was clear (σαφὲς δ' ἄν εἶπεν οὐδὲ ἓν), and in *Wealth* 1115 when Hermes complains that there is nothing at all for the other gods since Plutus has recovered his sight (οὐκ ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἓν).

Note that the details of the translations of the works used in this thesis are listed in the bibliography.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Logan 2016: xxviii.

encounter in Aristophanic comedy (and perhaps especially in *Birds*, *Ecclesiazusae*, and *Wasps*), and many Platonic and Aristotelian treatises. For the Utopians “think it completely unjust to bind people by a set of laws that are too many to read or too obscure for anyone to understand.”<sup>38</sup> They “consider the most obvious interpretation of any law to be the fairest... [because] the most simple and apparent sense of the law is open to everyone.”<sup>39</sup> More importantly, “if laws are not clear, they are useless; for simple-minded men...there might as well be no laws at all as laws which can be interpreted only by devious minds after endless disputes.”<sup>40</sup> The Utopians’ reasoning here is also based on the main fault that they find with other nations, namely that “their infinite volumes of laws and interpretations are not adequate,” for it is impossible to have a straightforward and fair government when there is a “mass of incomprehensibly intricate laws.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See *Utopia*, 86-7. There, Hythloday says: “As for lawyers, a class of men whose trade it is to manipulate cases and multiply quibbles, they exclude them entirely. They think it practical for each man to plead his own case, and say the same thing to the judge that he would tell his lawyer. This makes for less confusion and readier access to the truth. A man speaks his mind without tricky instructions from a lawyer, and the judge examines each point carefully, taking pains to protect simple folk against the accusations of the crafty.”

Cf. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 90. “...the laws should be drafted in plain terms, with the minimum of complications, so that there is little need for that grasping sort who call themselves lawyers and advocates...” Cf. Erasmus, *EM* p.150. “Amongst the learned the lawyers claim first place, the most self-satisfied class of people, as they roll their rock of Sisyphus and string together six hundred laws in the same breath, no matter whether relevant or not, piling up opinion on opinion...anything which causes trouble has special merit in their eyes.”

<sup>39</sup> *Utopia*, 87. See also Jardine 1997: 80 n. 136, who asserts that because More’s *Utopia* has few laws, it avoids “the proliferation of interpretations of the law, which bogs down administration.”

<sup>40</sup> *Utopia*, 87.

<sup>41</sup> *Utopia*, 86-7. Cf. Plutarch, *Sayings of Spartans*, 232c, “Those who use few words have need of but few laws.” It needs to be stated explicitly in regards to any Plutarchan Spartan reference cited in this thesis, that Plutarch is offering an *idealised* version of Sparta in his writings that is increasingly being doubted by modern scholars. (See, for example, Fine 1983: 143, and Hansen and Hodkinson 2009: 476). This is also true for More’s interpretation of Sparta: the key point is that it is not necessarily the reality of Sparta, but rather the Sparta that More knows.

According to Hythloday, there is no need for many laws because the excellent education that the Utopians receive obviates the need for a complex system of law. This idea that good training can replace elaborate legal systems is already present in the *Republic* when Socrates asserts that it is foolish to make laws concerning children and their demeanour in front of their parents because “verbal or written decrees will never make them come about or last” (οὔτε γάρ που γίνεται οὔτ’ ἂν μείνειεν λόγῳ τε καὶ γράμμασιν νομοθετηθέντα).<sup>42</sup> Rather, Socrates continues, “the start of someone’s education determines what follows” (ἐκ τῆς παιδείας ὅποι ἂν τις ὀρμήσῃ, τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ ἐπόμενα εἶναι).<sup>43</sup> This is why, he concludes, it is not necessarily important to try to make laws (οὐκ...ἐπιχειρήσαμι νομοθετεῖν) about these things. This is also true for laws concerning the government: when the ruler is well-trained and impartial, and when the magistrates do their job, there is no need for many laws.<sup>44</sup>

A similar sentiment appears in *Politics* 1337a10 when Aristotle makes clear that “the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth.” (ὅτι μὲν οὖν τῷ νομοθέτῃ μάλιστα πραγματευτέον περὶ τὴν τῶν νέων παιδείαν, οὐδεὶς ἂν ἀμφισβητήσῃε). Isocrates, too, draws on it in his *Areopagiticus* when he expresses that it is more important to produce citizens who refrain from committing any punishable act in the first place, rather than drawing up a list of potential punishments for those who are lawless.<sup>45</sup> Harding notes that

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On how More’s career as a lawyer and judge may have influenced him when drafting the Utopian legal system, see Zilko 1999: 49. Zilko argues, “More was expressing the frustrations of his own experiences applying the law, with all its attendant rigidity, in the common law courts.” This may be true in some ways, but I think in others ways this satirical portrayal of lawyers, and the law, is intended to be merely a joke. More, fitting in with the pun on his name, makes fun of his own occupation (and everything that comes with it), just like Aristophanes makes fun of the Athenians’ litigiousness and fondness for lawsuits in his comedies.

<sup>42</sup> *Rep.* 425b.

<sup>43</sup> *Rep.* 425b-c. Cf. *Tim.* 44c, the right educational training has the power to reinforce the soul so that man becomes faultless.

<sup>44</sup> *Rep.* 425c-e.

<sup>45</sup> *Areopagiticus* 42.

Isocrates' speech is based largely on "criticising the faults of fourth-century democracy and praising the way of life of past generations, especially those who had lived under the supervision of the Areopagus."<sup>46</sup> However, like More's work, the content of his speech is both humorous and serious, which is exemplified by the fact that it does bring to mind Aristophanes (especially *Wealth*, *Wasps*, and *Clouds*) on more than one occasion. In section 48, he notes that it is due to the excellent education of the young that

οὐκ ἐν τοῖς σκιραφείοις οἱ νεώτεροι διέτριβον, οὐδ' ἐν ταῖς αὐλητρίσιν, οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις συλλόγοις ἐν οἷς νῦν διημερεύουσιν. ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν ἔμενον ἐν οἷς ἐτάχθησαν, θαυμάζοντες καὶ ζηλοῦντες τοὺς ἐν τούτοις πρωτεύοντας. οὕτω δ' ἔφευγον τὴν ἀγοράν, ὥστ' εἰ καὶ ποτε διελθεῖν ἀναγκασθεῖεν, μετὰ πολλῆς αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης ἐφαίνοντο τοῦτο ποιοῦντες.

The young men did not waste their time in the gambling-dens with the flute-girls or in the kind of company in which they now spend their days, but remained steadfastly in the pursuits to which they had been assigned, admiring and emulating those who excelled in these. And so strictly did they avoid the market-place that even when they were at times compelled to pass through it, they were seen to do this with great modesty and sobriety of manner.

The note on how it is important to respects one's elders humorously recalls some of the arguments made in *Clouds*, but the emphasis on the significance of the education of the youth also connects with the philosophical treatises mentioned above as well as with More's education system in *Utopia*.<sup>47</sup>

Later, Plutarch discusses a similar approach in *Lycurgus* when he tells of Lycurgus who did not put any of his laws in writing because:<sup>48</sup>

τὰ μὲν γὰρ κυριώτατα καὶ μέγιστα πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν πόλεως καὶ ἀρετὴν, ἐν τοῖς ἥθεσιν ᾤετο καὶ ταῖς ἀγωγαῖς τῶν πολιτῶν ἐγκατεστοιχειωμένα μένειν ἀκίνητα καὶ βέβαια, ἔχοντα τὴν προαίρεσιν δεσμὸν ἰσχυρότερον τῆς ἀνάγκης, ἣν ἡ παιδείσιν ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς νέοις, νομοθέτου διάθεσιν ἀπεργαζομένη περὶ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν

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<sup>46</sup> Harding 1994: 206.

<sup>47</sup> See *Clouds* 991-998. Cf. Harding 1994: 208.

<sup>48</sup> *Lyc.* 13.1.

He thought that if the most important and binding principles which conduce to the prosperity and virtue of a city were implanted in the habits and training of its citizens, they would remain unchanged and secure, having a stronger bond than compulsion in the fixed purposes imparted to the young by education, which performs the office of a law-giver for every one of them

Liebert argues that on the practicality of the best regime, “Plutarch understands virtuous action itself to command admiration and obedience.”<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Plutarch shows in Lycurgus’ Sparta “how a regime oriented towards honour can educate for moderation as well as for courage.”<sup>50</sup> Certainly, “Plutarch is more sensitive to the political utility of honour than is Socrates in the *Republic*...”<sup>51</sup> It seems that More utilizes a similar approach when drawing up his ideal commonwealth, which devotes “its energies less to setting up laws than to forming the very best men to administer them.”<sup>52</sup> As Nelson notes, in *Utopia* “justice is instantiated by the rule of reason in the persons of the most excellent men; it results in a social existence which teaches citizens virtue.”<sup>53</sup>

The reference to Plutarch here reinforces the point made earlier, namely that More seems to incorporate a Plutarchan style of political philosophy when creating the legal system of the Utopians. More importantly, he draws from the life of a Spartan, rather than that of an Athenian or Roman. This emphasises further the idea that More does not merely present a post-Platonic, or post- Aristotelian commonwealth (even though he employs a similar kind of thinking in certain regards), but one that praises elements of the constitution of Lycurgus’ Sparta, as told by Plutarch in the *Parallel Lives*. This can also be seen in examples later on.

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<sup>49</sup> Liebert 2016: 111.

<sup>50</sup> Liebert 2009: 258. Cf. Liebert 2016: 25.

<sup>51</sup> Liebert 2009: 254. Cf. Liebert 2016: 2. According to Socrates in *Rep.* 545a-549b, Sparta is only the second-best regime because they put honour at the top and leave reason at the bottom.

<sup>52</sup> *Utopia*, 129-30.

<sup>53</sup> Nelson 2001: 895.

At the same time, despite the tendency towards Spartan attributes here, the point that it is important to educate properly the legal administrators of the ideal commonwealth can also be found in Plato. De Busleyden makes this connection clear in a letter he writes to More in 1516. He says: "...without good rulers, even the best laws (if we take Plato's word for it) would be nothing but dead letters."<sup>54</sup> De Busleyden refers to the Athenian in Plato's *Laws* vi.751b-c here who asserts:

παντί που δῆλον τὸ τοιοῦτον, ὅτι μεγάλου τῆς νομοθεσίας ὄντος ἔργου, τοῦ πόλιν εὖ παρεσκευασμένην ἀρχὰς ἀνεπιτηδείους ἐπιστῆσαι τοῖς εὖ κειμένοις νόμοις, οὐ μόνον οὐδὲν πλέον εὖ τεθέντων, οὐδ' ὅτι γέλωσ ἂν πάμπολυς συμβαίνοι, σχεδὸν δὲ βλάβαι καὶ λῶβαι πολὺ μέγιστα ταῖς πόλεσι γίνονται ἂν ἐξ αὐτῶν.

It's obvious to anyone, I suppose, this kind of thing, but lawgiving is a serious business, so if a city which has been well catered for appoints unsuitable officials to supervise laws that are well framed, not only does it get no advantage from them, well framed as they are – not to mention exposing the city to complete ridicule – but, broadly speaking, by far the greatest injuries and violence in cities arise from this cause.

The emphasis, which the Athenian puts on (moral) education here may have inspired More when he installed an awareness of the fundamental importance of a good education in the Utopians in order to avoid unnecessary legal quarrels. Hythloday expresses the same thought towards the end of *Utopia* when he says: "What is planted in the minds of children lives on in the minds of grown men and serves greatly to strengthen the commonwealth; its decline can always be traced to vices that arise from wrong attitudes."<sup>55</sup> Therefore, rather than focusing on making myriad laws that are too abstruse and too many to understand, the government in the best commonwealth should concentrate on installing prudence in the rulers (both current and future) in order to ensure a just conduct.

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<sup>54</sup> *Utopia*, 130.

<sup>55</sup> *Utopia*, 104.

Hythloday's disdain for obscure laws, and rulers who interpret laws in an arbitrary manner, is already present earlier on in his narration when he talks about the Utopian's poor opinion of treaties ("...the Utopians make none at all with any nation").<sup>56</sup> The citizens of Utopia do not trust treaties because "no treaty can be made so strong and explicit that a government will not be able to worm out of it, breaking in the process both the treaty and its own word."<sup>57</sup> Moreover, governments and rulers frequently "find some defect in the wording, which often enough they deliberately inserted themselves."<sup>58</sup> Again, comparable political thinking can be found in Plutarch's *Lycurgus* when Lycurgus "withdraws Sparta from the international economy, thus inoculating Spartan leaders to bribes foreign as well as domestic."<sup>59</sup>

Plutarch primarily focuses on the importation of foreign luxuries here, which, according to him, leads to political corruption and an unfair advantage of the wealthy over the poor. However, with Lycurgus' reforms, this stops. He writes, "but luxury, thus gradually

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<sup>56</sup> *Utopia*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> *Utopia*, 88.

<sup>58</sup> *Utopia*, 88.

<sup>59</sup> Liebert 2016: 117. Cf. *Lyc.* 31.1. This also shows that in both Lycurgus' Sparta, and More's Utopia, the concentration is on honour and virtue within their own borders, rather than on expansion or command over other nations, which includes travelling to other places. Socrates reflects on this at *Prot.* 342c-d when, referring to the Spartans, he says: καὶ αὐτοὶ οὐδένα ἐῶσιν τῶν νέων εἰς τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἐξίέναι...ἵνα μὴ ἀπομανθάνωσιν ἃ αὐτοὶ διδάσκουσιν. ("...while on their part they do not permit any of their young men to travel abroad to the other cities...lest they unlearn what they are taught at home"). Cf. *Laws* 704d-705a, Magnesia is located about ten miles from the sea because if it were any closer it would fill "the city with trade, with buying and selling for profit" which in turn would cause feelings of distrust and unfriendliness.

Ironically, in reality the Spartans are guilty of the sort of acts the Utopians despise. Liebert notes that after the Battle of Leuctra in 371, Sparta had "fallen victim to the wealth its victories had won. Rampant bribery came to shadow every avenue to public honor, so that leading Spartans had powerful incentives to become as rich as possible, by any means possible. Because Lycurgus had tied citizenship to the payment of mess dues, widening economic inequality added to the misery of poverty the dishonor of disenfranchisement." Liebert 2016: 106. On the Spartans' sophistic interpretation of treaties, see Bayliss 2009, especially pp. 245-253 and Bayliss 2017, especially p. 161.

deprived of that which stimulated and supported it, died away of itself, and men of large possessions had no advantage over the poor...” (ἀλλὰ οὕτως ἀπερημωθεῖσα κατὰ μικρὸν ἢ τρυφή τῶν ζωπυρούντων καὶ τρεφόντων αὐτὴ δι’ αὐτῆς ἐμαραίνεται: καὶ πλεῖον οὐδὲν ἦν τοῖς πολλὰ κεκτημένοις).<sup>60</sup> While the overall reason for Lycurgus’ decision is different from the one we find in *Utopia*, the link can still be made because both rationales stem from corruption and unfairness brought about by the government and the wealthy. In *Utopia*, this is exemplified further by Hythloday’s definition of the kind of justice that is found in the average commonwealth. He says:<sup>61</sup>

there are two kinds of justice, one for the common herd, a lowly justice that creeps along the ground, hedged in everywhere and encumbered with chains; and the other, which is the justice of princes, much more majestic and hence more free than common justice, so that it can do anything it wants and nothing it doesn’t want.

This contempt for leaders who interpret treaties and laws in their favour already appears in the first book of *Utopia* when Hythloday expresses his disapproval of complex legal systems, judges whose interests are not entirely altruistic, and absolute monarchs in general.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Lyc.* 9.4. Lycurgus’ opinion of luxury items here brings to mind Xenophanes’ criticism of useless luxuries (fr. 3), which allow people to care more about material possessions and wealth than about virtue. In regards to Xenophanes, his travels all over Greece as well as his elegiac and satirical poems recall the approach of Swift (and Gulliver) since his poetry also criticises and satirises a wide range of social and religious ideas. See Leshner 1992 for a commentary on Xenophanes’ fragments.

Cf. *Laws* 705b, if Magnesia exported a lot of goods and received much gold and silver in return, it would be the greatest impediment to them to acquire a just and honest character.

<sup>61</sup> *Utopia*, 88-9. The idea that *raison d’état* sometimes includes a style of politics that conflicts with traditional morality, is also present in the writings of Machiavelli, a contemporary of More. However, there are also important differences between More’s *Utopia* and Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. For instance, “*The Prince* concerns political action and the duties of political leadership; while *Utopia* presents the portrait of a ‘best commonwealth’ in which political action has remarkably little place.” Tinkler 1988: 188.

<sup>62</sup> More’s contempt for absolute monarchs shows another important difference between his and Plato’s political theory. As Surtz writes: “For Plato, the just state is an aristocracy, not a timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, or tyranny. More, on the other hand, condemns the absolutism of kings, the insolence of nobles, and the exploitation of the poor.” See Surtz 1965: clviii.

Specifically, he points at the contradictions and questionable legal decisions that are present in legal matters all too often. In a Socratic manner that especially brings to mind the debates in Old Comedy, and also the concerns raised in Greek comedy about the Athenians constantly going back and forth at law, he discusses the various ways in which a king and his councillors may attempt to fill the king's treasury.

Hythloday asserts that there are a few options the king and his councillors would mention in such an exchange of ideas (such as increasing the value of money, pretending the nation is at war in order to raise money under that pretext, or installing many heavy fines for various things). However, the three most important ones for this discussion are the following: (i) one councillor "calls to mind some old moth-eaten laws, antiquated by long disuse, which no one remembers being made and therefore everyone has transgressed, and suggests that the king levy fines for breaking them."<sup>63</sup> (ii) Another councillor proposes "that he work on the judges so they will decide every case in the royal interest;"<sup>64</sup> and (iii) that the king should find judges who will give different opinions because "if...judges give differing opinions, the clearest matter in the world can be made cloudy and truth itself brought into question."<sup>65</sup> In this way, "the king is given a convenient handle to interpret the law in his favour, and everyone else will acquiesce from shame or fear." Thus, Hythloday continues, "either equity is on the king's side, or the letter of the law makes for him, or a twisted interpretation of a

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<sup>63</sup> *Utopia*, 33. Cf. *Utopia*, 35. "Let [the king] not rashly revive antiquated laws, especially if they have been long forgotten and never missed." This is also why "Utopian laws are based on reason rather than tradition and are drafted so as to be immediately intelligible to all citizens." See Norbrook 2002: 17. See also Zilko 1999: 55.

<sup>64</sup> *Utopia*, 33.

<sup>65</sup> *Utopia*, 33.

document, or the factor which in the end outweighs all laws for scrupulous judges, the indisputable prerogative of the prince.”<sup>66</sup>

It is clear that there is a large streak of disapproving sentiments towards unnecessarily complicated juridical matters that runs through Hythloday’s examples, which links back to one of the fundamental premises of Utopia where “the law is left simple [and] affords no chance for the crafty handling of cases or the tricky arguing of technical points.”<sup>67</sup> This also includes the absence of lawsuits, which according to Hythloday, is primarily due to the fact that the citizens of Utopia do not own private property. As he asserts, “in [other] nations, whatever a man can get he calls his own private property; but all the mass of laws enacted day

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<sup>66</sup> *Utopia*, 33. Cf. Erasmus, *Chr. Prin.*, pp. 87-8. “Like the prince, the law must, more than anything else, be accessible and fair to all; otherwise, as the Greek philosopher cleverly put it, the laws will be nothing but spiders’ webs, which birds can easily break because of their size, and in which only flies will be entangled.” (Erasmus reiterates this statement a couple of pages later at *Chr. Prin.*, p. 90). He refers to Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.2.58 (on *Solon*) here. There it says: Ἐλεγε δὲ τὸν μὲν λόγον εἰδῶλον εἶναι τῶν ἔργων: βασιλέα δὲ τὸν ἰσχυρότατον τῇ δυνάμει. τοὺς δὲ νόμους τοῖς ἀραχνίσις ὁμοίους: καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνα, ἐὰν μὲν ἐμπέσῃ τι κοῦφον καὶ ἀσθενές, στέγειν: ἐὰν δὲ μείζον, διακόψαν οἴχεσθαι. (“Speech is the mirror of action; and another that the strongest and most capable is king. He compared laws to spiders' webs, which stand firm when any light and yielding object falls upon them, while a larger thing breaks through them and makes off”).

Plutarch attributes the comparison of laws to spider webs, which catch the weak but which the strong are able to break through, to Anacharsis who supposedly used this saying to refer to the laws of Solon as well. See *Solon* 5.2. The comic poet Platon, a contemporary of Aristophanes, uses the same comparison at Photius p.638.5. See also Stobaeus *Serm.* xlv. 25, who ascribes the saying to the Locrian lawgiver, Zaleucus.

<sup>67</sup> Hexter 1965: lv. This also feeds into Erasmus’ critique of tyranny. Like More, Erasmus is concerned with the multiplicity of laws and tyrants’ arbitrary ruling. He uses Dionysius of Syracuse as an example and writes that he established most of his laws according to a tyrannical scheme. Specifically, he writes, “[Dionysius of Syracuse] passed a great many laws, piling one on top of another, but he is said to have allowed his people to ignore them and in this way to have made everyone beholden to him. That was not making laws, but setting traps.” A good ruler, however, Erasmus writes, will “spare no effort to enact the best possible laws, those most beneficial to the state, rather than a great number. A very small number of laws will be sufficient in a well-ordered state under a good prince and honest magistrates, and if things are otherwise, no amount of laws will suffice.” Erasmus, *Chr. Prin.*, pp. 79-80. See also Hexter and Surtz 1965: 363.

after day don't enable him to secure his own or to defend it...as is shown by innumerable and interminable lawsuits, fresh ones every day."<sup>68</sup>

Hythloday's criticism here does not only derive from unjust lawyers but also from the unequal distribution of wealth he sees in his own, and other, societies. He struggles to understand how a commonwealth cannot make "proper provision for the welfare of farmers and colliers, labourers, carters and carpenters, without whom the commonwealth would simply not exist."<sup>69</sup> Moreover, he asserts, "the rich constantly try to grind out of the poor part of their daily wages, not only by swindling but by public laws... [and] by promulgating law, they have transmuted this perversion into justice."<sup>70</sup> This feeling of unfairness based on the unequal distribution of wealth in society is another example that brings to mind Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, as has already been made clear in the point on foreign and domestic affairs. (It also recalls the ending of Lucian's *Menippus*, which outlines the satiric decree, voted for by souls in the underworld, that the wealthy, who have formerly oppressed the poor, will be send back to earth in the shape of donkeys where they will bear the burdens of the poor).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Utopia*, 39. Hexter and Surtz 1965: 379 write, "The disappearance of lawsuits has always been a promised result or concomitant of communism." This sentiment towards lawsuits also appears in *Rep.* 464d-e when Socrates asserts that the guardians will be spared all the conflict and disagreement that arise from lawsuits. See also *Lyc.* 24.3-4, where Plutarch reports that lawsuits vanished in Sparta alongside gold and silver coinage, because there was neither greed nor want but equality all around. This take on the elimination of lawsuits readily brings to mind Praxagora's political proposal in *Eccl.*, which, among others, promises the abolition of lawsuits and legal battles.

<sup>69</sup> *Utopia*, 110.

<sup>70</sup> *Utopia*, 111. See Ames 1949: 128, who argues, "This passage clearly refers to the legislation of recent parliaments, completed in the parliament of 1515, which re-enacted the old statutes against laborers while removing clauses unfavorable to employers."

<sup>71</sup> *Menippus*, in turn, brings to mind *Phaedo* 81e-82a, where Socrates, referring to metempsychosis, asserts, "those who have indulged in gluttony and violence and drunkenness, and have taken no pains to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other beasts of that sort." ὅτιον τοὺς μὲν γαστριμαργίας τε καὶ ὕβρεις καὶ φιλοποσίας μεμελετηκότας καὶ μὴ διηυλαβημένους εἰς τὰ τῶν ὄνων γένη καὶ τῶν τοιούτων θηρίων εἰκὸς ἐνδύεσθαι).

In Sparta, the unequal distribution of wealth was due not only because of trade but also because of unjust land ownership. Plutarch writes, before Lycurgus' reforms, "there was a dreadful inequality in this regard, the city was heavily burdened with indigent and helpless people, and wealth was wholly concentrated in the hands of a few" (δεινῆς γάρ οὔσης ἀνωμαλίας καὶ πολλῶν ἀκτημόνων καὶ ἀπόρων ἐπιφερομένων τῇ πόλει, τοῦ δὲ πλοῦτου παντάπασιν εἰς ὀλίγους συνερρηκός).<sup>72</sup> However, Lycurgus redistributes land and by doing so, "...eliminates at stroke the envy and emulation that attend property...[and] forces political corruption into the open, where it can be shamed."<sup>73</sup> Again, the focus is on honour and shame, which brings to mind fundamental attributes of the Utopian society, which concentrates on honourable and virtuous training of the young, and punishment if they fail to live up to these honours and virtues adequately.<sup>74</sup>

It is worth noting that Lycurgus' reforms do not only recall Hythloday's criticism of other commonwealths of his time here, but they also bring to mind the very foundation of Utopia by Utopus. For Utopus, "...conquered the country and gave it his name...and...brought its rude, uncouth inhabitants to such a high level of culture and

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Furthermore, More's take on the unequal distribution of wealth in society recalls Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation of Plato's dialogues. When Ficino summarises Plato's theory that cities, which are made up of both rich and poor citizens are not actually one city but two, he describes the philosopher's solution to the problem: "whence he arrived step by step at his mystery, that everything should certainly be held in common. Some would not have less, nor truly others more. And it is from the former circumstance that jealousies, lies, thefts are born, while extravagance, pride, and sloth are born from the latter circumstance." Ficino, *Platonis opera*, p. 232. Nelson 2001: 900 states, "Erasmus drew heavily on [Ficino's] work" and "although More was accomplished in Greek, it is probable that he too consulted Ficino's translations." Certainly, as Nelson argues further, "Ficino's characterization of Platonic 'justice' as 'the order and health of the society'... is very much the view of justice we encounter in *Utopia*." Nelson 2001: 901.

<sup>72</sup> *Lyc.* 8.1.

<sup>73</sup> Liebert 2016: 117.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Utopia*, 82.

humanity that they now surpass almost every other people.”<sup>75</sup> While there is not quite such a level of superiority in *Life of Lycurgus* (and, as mentioned earlier, according to Socrates in the *Republic*, Sparta is not superior but only second-best because of its very focus on honour and shame), the connection is worth making. This is because the foundation of Utopia does reflect the improvements made by Greek lawgivers such as Lycurgus (or Solon for that matter) who establish or alter politics.<sup>76</sup>

Additionally, Lycurgus’ political thinking in regard to the redistribution of land connects with the passages of Hythloday’s speech quoted above, which reflect the view that law does not necessarily equate with justice - a view of which there is a clear thread throughout *Utopia*. This is why (and it appears that Lycurgus employs a similar kind of thinking here) law, in order to be just, needs to include moral principles, which cannot be ignored in favour of the wealthy or (potentially antiquated) laws made by them.<sup>77</sup> Hightet, referring to Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*, asserts similarly that the text “treats [Lycurgus] as a great statesman who saw that the legislator’s first duty is to ensure *moral education*.”<sup>78</sup> “Together with Plutarch’s other accounts of Spartan virtue,” continues Hightet, this embodies the belief “that the innate goodness of man could be developed by good institutions. Political reform was to be moral reform.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Utopia*, 44.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Traugott 1961: 544, who juxtaposes Utopus and Lycurgus, and says, “...there was an eponymous Utopus who like Lycurgus lived and established things once upon a time forevermore...”

<sup>77</sup> Liebert 2016: 110 notes that this is also evident in Xenophon’s *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians* where Lycurgus is “portrayed as a reflective, almost philosophical lawgiver constantly observing foreign regimes, considering the limitations and potentialities of human nature, and inventing novel solutions to long-standing problems.” See Liebert 2016: 107. Lycurgus’ reforms are also a rebuttal of Aristotle’s critique of Sparta being a society where wealth is distributed unequally. As Liebert asserts, to this criticism, “Plutarch counters with an austere Sparta in which wealth was carefully controlled.”

<sup>78</sup> Hightet 1949: 394.

<sup>79</sup> Hightet 1949: 394-5.

The emphasis on moral reform in Plutarch recalls the point made earlier in *Utopia* about kings using certain laws to their advantage, especially to gain money. To them, this approach allows for a rich, and creditable, source of income “since it can be made to wear the mask of justice.”<sup>80</sup> At the end of the day, however, many of those laws only look like justice while in reality they are neither just nor beneficial to the majority of the citizens of the commonwealth.<sup>81</sup> It is clear that More feels uneasy about these juridical problems of his time: in his opinion the line between just laws and seemingly just laws, and the deliberate abuse of them, is too thin. All too often it is not the law that triumphs, “but the king’s appetite, cloaked in forms of law.”<sup>82</sup>

In the same vein, the line between just politics and tyranny is also too thin because wherever “there is politics, there tyranny becomes a possibility.”<sup>83</sup> Where there is tyranny, the meaning of law and truth is based solely on the tyrant’s will, and may change at any given moment.<sup>84</sup> More voices the same concern in his reply to Lucian’s *Tyrannicide* where he asks Lucian why he has to remind him of laws in a tyranny (*quid in Tyrannide leges memorat*). After all, “they are laws in name only” (*legum ista nomina sunt*) and it is ultimately up to the tyrant to decide how he wants to use them.<sup>85</sup> This is something Swift is concerned with as

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<sup>80</sup> *Utopia*, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Utopia*, 21. Logan notes that More’s disappointment with the commonwealths of his time, (“[he sees] in them nothing but a conspiracy of the rich, who are advancing their own interests under the name and title of the commonwealth,” *Utopia*, 111), may allude to the judgment of St. Augustine: “if justice is left out, what are kingdoms but great robber bands?” See Augustine, *The City of God* 4.4 and Logan 2016: 111 n. 147.

<sup>82</sup> Fenlon 1981: 469.

<sup>83</sup> Fenlon 1981: 454.

<sup>84</sup> More expresses these feelings in more detail in his *The History of King Richard the Third*, written between 1513 and 1518 (but left unpublished), which explores the consequences of tyranny.

<sup>85</sup> *More’s Declamation in Reply to Lucian’s*, 104-5. Specifically, More refers to the succession of the throne under a tyranny here. According to his response, “there is no lawful inheritance of government [in a tyranny], since all just laws are suspended and ineffective...” Meyer 2014: 636. More asserts, “A tyrant always dies intestate, since the laws, which alone

well. Traugott asserts that Swift is aware “of the linguistic process by which tyrants destroy the meanings of words.” By doing so, continues Traugott, “a tyrant can reduce life to insane paradox...anything can mean anything.”<sup>86</sup>

This is why at the heart of *Utopia*, there is “More’s deep understanding of – and scathing contempt for – immoral, self-serving rulers and their enablers, his profound sympathy for their victims and his passionate desire to expose their machinations and depredations...”<sup>87</sup> Again, this relates to Plutarch’s Lycurgus, whose reforms seek to prevent Spartan leaders from engaging with (monetary) corruption that may influence their rule. In this way, it also becomes clear that *Utopia* is not necessarily about constructing the perfect commonwealth, but it is more about constructing the best possible commonwealth of More’s time, namely a commonwealth that is able to prevent the emergence of tyranny.<sup>88</sup> The same can be said for Lycurgus’ Sparta, which, before his reforms, vacillates between tyranny and democracy, but does now enjoy the safest arrangement (ἰσορροπήσασα τὴν ἀσφαλεστάτην τάξιν ἔσχε) that helps the Spartan people to withstand tyranny.<sup>89</sup>

However, in *Utopia*, the prevention of tyranny, which is made more vital by a fear of factionalism in general, comes at a price. Specifically, in order to avoid the emergence of (tyrannical) factions, it is prohibited to have political discussions in private. As Hythloday reports in the second book of *Utopia*: “It is a capital offence to make plans about public business outside the senate or the popular assembly. The purpose of these rules...is to prevent

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can make a will valid, are held captive by him. In like manner, he who succeeds to the place of a deceased tyrant is not an heir but a new tyrant, for he does not succeed but usurps.” *Declamation*, p. 105.

<sup>86</sup> Traugott 1961: 543.

<sup>87</sup> Logan 2011: 168.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Fenlon 1981: 462. “More’s eyes were open when he entered politics. His object was not to build *Utopia*. It was to prevent the re-enactment of *Richard III*.”

<sup>89</sup> *Lycurgus* 5.6-7. Cf. Liebert 2016: 115.

governor and tranibors<sup>90</sup> from conspiring together to alter the government and enslave the people.”<sup>91</sup> This prohibition is further emphasised by the fact that in Utopia, there are “no chances for corruption; no hiding places; no spots for secret meetings.”<sup>92</sup> Hythloday refers back to this in the closing paragraph of the second book when he says: “Now that [the Utopians] have torn up the seeds of ambition and faction at home...they are in no danger from internal strife, which alone has destroyed the prosperity of many cities that seemed eminently secure.”<sup>93</sup>

Even so, despite the positive aspect, the open spaces and lack of opportunity to cause internal strife also result in something else, namely the elimination of individuality. Again, this brings to mind a passage in Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*, which portrays a similar lack of individuality. At 25.3, he asserts:

τὸ δὲ ὅλον εἴθιζε τοὺς πολίτας μὴ βούλεσθαι μηδὲ ἐπίστασθαι κατ’ ἰδίαν ζῆν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ τᾶς μελίττας τῷ κοινῷ συμφυεῖς ὄντας ἀεὶ καὶ μετ’ ἀλλήλων εἰλουμένους περὶ τὸν ἄρχοντα, μικροῦ δεῖν ἐξεστῶτα ἐαυτῶν ὑπ’ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ φιλοτιμίας, ὅλους εἶναι τῆς πατρίδος

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<sup>90</sup> On the use of ‘tranibor,’ Thompson notes, “we find in *Utopia* many fanciful names coined from Greek...a Lucianic trick, though Aristophanic as well.” See Thompson 1974: xlvi. Berger 1982 states that ‘tranibor’ means ‘plain glutton’ (τρανής + βορός). This probably refers to More’s disdain for those who relentlessly gather money and land at the expense of others. On this being an Aristophanic (or, old comic) trick, see for instance Galen, *Glosses on Hippocrates* 19 p. 65 K. On the Lucianic aspects of this trick (and his ‘onomastic games’), see Ní Mheallaigh 2010: 126-7 and Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 175-6.

<sup>91</sup> *Utopia*, 50. In case any Utopian is caught committing such an offence, they are punished harshly (e.g. with enslavement or execution) because “they had an excellent education and the best of moral training, yet still couldn’t be restrained from wrongdoing.” See *Utopia*, 82. This is in line with Plato’s reasoning for punishing the citizens of his ideal state more harshly than the non-citizens if they commit a crime. See *Laws* 854e.

<sup>92</sup> *Utopia*, 62. Cf. *Utopia*, 48. “Every house has a front door to the street and a back door to the garden. The double doors, which open easily with a push of the hand and close again automatically, let anyone come in – so there is nothing private anywhere.” See Greenblatt 1980: 47 who states that the original Latin makes this point even clearer: *ita nihil usquam priuati est*.

<sup>93</sup> *Utopia*, 112. This recalls the point made earlier that like Lycurgus, the Utopians are more concerned with honour and peace within their own borders, and command over their own people, rather than command over other nations.

In a word, he trained his fellow-citizens to have neither the wish nor the ability to live for themselves; but like bees they were to make themselves always integral parts of the whole community, clustering together about their leader, almost beside themselves with enthusiasm and noble ambition, and to belong wholly to their country.

As is the case in More's *Utopia*, in Lycurgus' Sparta, the citizen "is always outside of himself, more a creature of the city than his own man."<sup>94</sup> The rationale for installing these measures, and for training the citizens in these ways, is again comparable in both cases: the assurance of greater stability of the law and the government.

In *Utopia*, this also brings to mind the overall intended effect of the arrangement of the Utopian legal system. Namely, it is socially, and legally, impossible to conspire against the government and to destabilise the law by tyrannical means because "men live all the time under everyone's eyes."<sup>95</sup> More importantly, these coercive practices are "by no means accidental [but] built into the logic of the ideal state."<sup>96</sup> Indeed, they are part of the plan of living the Utopians have adopted through which "they have laid the foundation of a commonwealth that is not only very happy but also, so far as human prescience can tell, likely to last forever."<sup>97</sup> The argument that the laws and institutions of the best commonwealth are

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<sup>94</sup> Liebert 2016: 122.

<sup>95</sup> Hexter 1965: ciii. Cf. Sylvester 1963: c and Carroll 1996: 253.

The statement that 'men live all the time under everyone's eyes' brings to mind Isocrates' *Areopagiticus* 46-7, where he asserts that the Athenian forefathers "kept watch over the life of every citizen" (δήμους ἐθεώρουν τὸν βίον τὸν ἐκάστου). This watchfulness is necessary, "for where no watch is kept over such matters and the judgments are not strict, there even honest natures grow corrupt" (παρ' οἷς μὲν γὰρ μήτε φυλακὴ μηδεμία τῶν τοιούτων καθέστηκε μήθ' αἱ κρίσεις ἀκριβεῖς εἰσι, παρὰ τούτοις μὲν διαφθείρεσθαι καὶ τὰς ἐπιεικεῖς τῶν φύσεων). As is the case in *Utopia*, close surveillance and harsh punishment is the primary concern of the Areopagus in the old days, according to Isocrates. See also Harding 1994: 208.

<sup>96</sup> Yoran 2005: 8.

<sup>97</sup> *Utopia*, 112.

designed in a way that enables it to last forever, is also evident in the letter de Busleyden's sends to More in 1516. He writes:<sup>98</sup>

Had [Sparta, Athens and Rome] been founded under the same auspices as your commonwealth and governed by the same institutions, laws, regulations and customs, certainly they would not now be fallen, levelled to the ground and extinguished – alas! – beyond all hope of rebirth. On the contrary, they would now be intact, fortunate and prosperous, leading a happy existence...<sup>99</sup>

This is why the political and legal system of Utopia is set up the way it is: it is (i) to avoid the fate of other commonwealths, brought about by inadequate legal systems and political regulations, and (ii) “to temper laws which [are] complex and unjust in their application.”<sup>100</sup>

There may be no place to hide on the island, and no opportunity to engage in political and legal discussion outside the assembly or the senate, but to More, this seems to be a price worth paying for the abolition of tyranny and the unfair application of laws. As Logan writes: “...there appears to be an inescapable trade-off between the requirements for securing the

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<sup>98</sup> *Utopia*, 129. It is significant that de Busleyden mentions Sparta first here, rather than Athens or Rome. On the one hand, this underlines the influence of *Life of Lycurgus* on the work, and thus also that of Plutarchan political philosophy. On the other hand, it also brings to mind the defeat of Sparta at the battle of Leuctra, which left Spartan power shattered. See Polybius 4.81.12, “the Lacedaemonians who ever since the legislation of Lycurgus had enjoyed the best form of government and had the greatest power until the battle of Leuctra, when chance henceforth turned against them, and their system of government instead of improving began to go rapidly from bad to worse...”

<sup>99</sup> A similar notion appears in *Stat.* 297d, where the Stranger, building onto his argument that the best government has written laws, says to the Young Socrates, that every government must employ the written laws of the best government if they wish to be preserved. This is why, he says at 301e, it is always necessary to ‘follow in the track of the perfect government by coming together and making written laws.’

<sup>100</sup> Zilko 1999: 62. Cf. *Utopia*, 129. See also the letter Guillaume Budé sends to Thomas Lupset in 1517 in which he praises the Utopians’ attitude towards legal matters. He believes that if the gods could cause Utopian policies “to be fixed by the bolts of strong and settled conviction in the minds of all mortals. ...The immense weight of all those legal volumes, which occupy so many brilliant and solid minds for their whole lifetimes, would suddenly turn to empty air, the paper food for worms or used to wrap parcels in shops.” See *Utopia*, 121. (Budé might find entertainment in Philocleon’s decision to throw away the voting urns and dismiss the jurors at *Wasps* 1339-41).

commonwealth, and the attainment of freedom for its inhabitants...”<sup>101</sup> Yoran asserts similarly: “for achieving the all-important goal of an egalitarian as well as a stable social order, the freedom and even the individuality of the citizens had to be compromised.”<sup>102</sup>

Indeed, the Utopians’ political and legal system does affect the citizens’ individuality in that it provides only “minimal scope to individual idiosyncrasy.”<sup>103</sup> Greenblatt states likewise, “Utopian institutions are cunningly designed to reduce the scope of the ego: avenues of self-aggrandizement are blocked, individuation is sharply limited.”<sup>104</sup> However, building a system that has this kind of impact on the Utopians’ individuality also eliminates the possibility for them to adopt readily different disguises. As mentioned earlier, this is one of Hythloday’s objections to both royal and legal service – kings and lawyers can adopt, like a cloak, an infinite variety of opinions and masks that interfere with the truth and justice of law.<sup>105</sup> In this way, the succession of kings has “no more value than a stage play, with the

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<sup>101</sup> Logan 1983: 258. See also Logan 1983: 252.

<sup>102</sup> Yoran 2005: 11.

<sup>103</sup> Hexter 1965: ciii.

<sup>104</sup> Greenblatt 1980: 39. This is another aspect of the Utopian constitution that brings to mind that of Lycurgus. In the *Comparison of Lycurgus and Numa* 4.4, Plutarch writes that the regulated training of the Spartan youth ensured that “there might be no confusing differences in their characters, but that they might be moulded and fashioned from the very outset so as to walk harmoniously together in the same path of virtue.” (ὅπως μὴ διάφοροι μηδὲ παραχῶδεις γένοιτο τοῖς ἥθεσιν, ἀλλ’ εἰς ἓν τι κοινὸν ἀρετῆς ἵχνος εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς πλαττόμενοι καὶ τυπούμενοι συμβαίνοιεν ἀλλήλοις).

Again, as is the case with the other Plutarchan Spartan references in this chapter, it is significant to note that Plutarch is offering an idealised version of Sparta that does not necessarily relate to the reality of Sparta.

<sup>105</sup> This is also one of the major themes of *The History of King Richard the III*, i.e. the discrepancy between the public appearance and the actual, hidden, motive; and More conveys this through theatrical metaphor. As More writes, “and so they said that these matters be kings’ games, as it were, stage plays, and for the most part played upon scaffolds, in which poor men be but the on-lookers.” *Richard III*, 73. It also echoes Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, which More had translated earlier, which presents “man as an essentially rhetorical creature, capable of adopting an infinite variety of disguises rather than possessing one unvaried and natural essence.” See Norbrook 2002: 7.

various participants simply acting out fictional roles.”<sup>106</sup> However, in *Utopia*, each citizen possesses only one, invariable, persona, which makes any type of (tyrannical) role-play impossible.<sup>107</sup>

At the same time however, though More is well aware of the social, political, and legal consequences of tyranny, he is also able to offer a compromise to Hythloday’s protest. While he does not necessarily disagree with him, he also believes that the citizens should not “give up the ship in a storm because [they] cannot hold back the winds.”<sup>108</sup> Instead, he asserts, they should employ a civil philosophy (i.e. a philosophy, “suited for the role of the citizen”<sup>109</sup>) that is informed by rhetoric, as it “adapts itself to the drama in hand and acts its part neatly and appropriately.”<sup>110</sup>

This philosophy is undeniably Ciceronian (see *Orator* xxxv.123), but it is also Aeschylean. It recalls Aeschylus’ ship of state metaphor at *PV* 150-1 and 186-192, and it also brings to mind Oceanus’ warning at *PV* 308-12, when he tells Prometheus to change his

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<sup>106</sup> Betteridge 2013: 43.

<sup>107</sup> See also Greenblatt 1980: 41 and 62. Cf. Traugott 1961: 551, who states, “the moral superiority of the public good over personal and the mutual subjection of the members of the commonwealth” are also principles of Swift’s political philosophy. He argues: “Like More’s communism, Swift’s principle of ‘mutual subjection’ is an argument against individualism and for the common body.”

The idea that individuality, and concentration on personal advancement rather than the public good, is potentially dangerous, can also be linked back to many Greek political treatises. For instance, in Thucydides 2.65.7, the Athenians allow themselves to be taken over by private interests and private ambitions and fail to focus on what is good for the country. Likewise, 6.15.2-4 shows, how “Alcibiades’ private excesses are coming to compromise the city’s welfare” when he hopes to gain personal wealth and favourable reputation by means of his successes. Pelling 2000: 53. Again, this reflects More’s disdain for individuals gathering wealth (and power) at the expense of others, which also ties into his critique of Richard III whose “real crime [according to More] is not legal...but communal. Richard broke the bounds of community that, within the tradition of political thought inspired by Aristotle’s thought, are the basis of ethical government.” Betteridge 2013: 41.

<sup>108</sup> *Utopia*, 37.

<sup>109</sup> *Utopia*, 36.

<sup>110</sup> *Utopia*, 36. Cf. Traugott 1961: 554-5. “More cared for ‘history’ as an allegorical drama in which certain individuals happened to play certain rôles always well-known to the mind that examines life.”

speech and adapt to the new situation (i.e. Zeus' regime). Furthermore, it is Aristophanic, because at *Thesm.* 149-52, Agathon tells the relative: *χρῆ γὰρ ποιητὴν ἄνδρα πρὸς τὰ δράματα ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν, πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς τρόπους ἔχειν. αὐτίκα γυναικεῖ ἦν ποιῆ τις δράματα, μετουσίαν δεῖ τῶν τρόπων τὸ σῶμ' ἔχειν.* ("To be a poet, a man must suit his behaviour to the requirements of his plays. If, say, he's writing plays about women, his body must partake of women's behaviour").<sup>111</sup>

More exemplifies this idea of a civil philosophy by offering the following analogy (which highlights once again the versatility of his text, as he continues to correspond elegantly with literary themes from the past in order to achieve true intellectual emulation): when a comedy by Plautus is put on, one cannot simply come on stage and start quoting a tragedy by Seneca because plays are perverted and ruined when influenced by irrelevant speeches. Even if the irrelevant speeches were better than the play itself, continues More, it would still "be better to take a silent role than to say something inappropriate and...turn the play into a tragicomedy."<sup>112</sup>

Instead, rather than giving "strange and out-of-the-way speeches to people with whom they will carry no weight," one should follow an indirect approach and handle matters as tactfully as one can in order to make things "as little bad as possible."<sup>113</sup> This is because, More writes, "it is impossible to make everything good unless all men are good, and that I

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<sup>111</sup> Agathon's point refers to the relative's disguise and altered speech when he enters the women's sphere, and it emphasises More's civil philosophy because it shows how man must adapt his behaviour to the present set of circumstances.

<sup>112</sup> *Utopia*, 37. A comparable idea can be found in *Lycurgus* 19.1, where Lycurgus installs into young Spartans the habit of silence, for "intemperance in talking makes discourse empty and vapid." See also *Mor.* 506c. Cf. David 1999: 119 and Ducat 2006: 36. See Bayliss 2009: 236-240 for the 'brevity' of Spartan speech. The same sentiment appears in Aristophanes' *Clouds* 960-965 and 1058-9. There is also a fragment of *Prometheus Unbound*, which may allude to a similar notion. *πολλοῖς γὰρ ἔστι κέρδος ἢ σιγή βροτῶν.* "For to many mortals silence is advantageous." (Scholia (M B D) to Aelius Aristeides, *Oration* 3.97).

<sup>113</sup> *Utopia*, 37. Cf. Wooden 1977: 39.

don't expect to see for quite a few years yet."<sup>114</sup> However, what can be done in the meantime is "to work so as to restrain the vicious and reduce the scope of evil."<sup>115</sup> On the one hand, the advice to accept reality in order to make things 'as little bad as possible' bears again Aeschylean connotations, because it brings to mind the advice Kratos gives to Hephaestus at *PV* 66-8, when he urges him to stop pitying Prometheus because it will only make matters worse for himself. On the other hand, this approach also links back to the point made earlier about how More's intention is not to create the best commonwealth of all times but a commonwealth that reduces the possibilities of evil as much as possible, especially the ever-looming threat of tyranny.

It is, perhaps, due to the somewhat contradictory meanings of these connotations that this approach also includes satirical features. Even though More believes that it is impossible to make everything good unless everyone is good, he invents a society that "posits a kind of golden humanity, faceless and obedient, a race of beings from whose composition all of the limited and unpleasant features have been erased."<sup>116</sup> Indeed, as Dudok points out, "... [A] model state as such is an utter impossibility; because More does not invent ideal institutions for mankind, but an ideal mankind for their institutions."<sup>117</sup> Certainly, this satirises the humanist belief in the reforming power of education (and thus also one of the core principles of Utopian and Platonic philosophy), as "the obvious practical difficulty with this design is

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<sup>114</sup> *Utopia*, 37.

<sup>115</sup> Fenlon 1981: 461. Cf. Sylvester 1963: cii.

See also the letter Erasmus sends to Ulrich von Hutten in 1516 in which he describes More's optimistic opinion that it is always possible to look at things positively. He writes: "There is nothing that occurs in human life, from which [More] does not seek to extract some pleasure, although the matter may be serious in itself. If he has to do with the learned and intelligent, he is delighted with their cleverness, if with unlearned or stupid people, he finds amusement in their folly. He is not offended even by professed clowns, as he adapts himself with marvellous dexterity to the tastes of all."

<sup>116</sup> Wooden 1977: 38.

<sup>117</sup> Dudok 1923: 174.

that a fallible, variegated humanity will never conform to it.”<sup>118</sup> The kind of idealism that More presents here is not teachable; and thus it resembles more the satirical recourse to the fantastic we witness in Lucian and Swift, rather than those of actual civil philosophy. (Of course, the etymology of the name Utopia highlights this, too. It does spell ‘nowhere,’ after all).<sup>119</sup>

Nonetheless, More’s principles presented in *Utopia* (though carried to such an illogical extreme that they are hardly feasible), have the double perspective of comic fantasy and apt realism; and this approach can also be found in Aristophanes, Plato, and later Swift. As Ruskin puts it, “What an infinitely wise – infinitely foolish – book [*Utopia*] is! Right in all it asks – insane, in venturing to ask it, all at once – so making its own wisdom folly for ever more.”<sup>120</sup> Much like Aristophanic comedy, Platonic dialogues, and Swiftian travel tales, *Utopia* has the potential to combine the wise and the silly (which again echoes its Lucianic tone), as it satirises the truth in an entertaining adventure story. The mockery of tyranny (and, in More’s case, especially the mockery of Richard III), and the contempt for factionalism and individualism clearly inform many passages in *Utopia* and reflect the author’s disapproval of these principles. At the same time, the very solution More proposes is a clever mockery in itself because he proposes a new tyrannical system in order to bring an end to the old one.

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<sup>118</sup> Wooden 1977: 38.

<sup>119</sup> It is this idealism, which Swift, according to Nichols, objects to in *Gulliver’s Travels*. Precisely, he argues, “the dangerous propensity of philosophy that Swift criticizes [is] the inclination to turn away from humanity in search for perfection.” He portrays in Gulliver “the folly of man who tries to stamp out [human] passions under the influence of a mistaken notion of virtue and reason.” Nichols 1981: 1169. Indeed, “in his love of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver accepts an idea of perfection which makes it impossible for him either to understand or to participate in human life.” Nichols 1981: 1154. Swift’s criticism of his own character recalls that of More when he asks Hythloday to adopt a more realistic, and more practical, philosophy – one that will work among human beings.

<sup>120</sup> This quotation is taken from a letter John Ruskin sends to Frederick Startridge Ellis in 1870 to thank him for getting a hold of a copy of *Utopia* for him.

Specifically, the fact that on the Utopian island, the threat of tyranny is exchanged for the absence of individual freedom and, more importantly, restricted freedom of political speech, is another serio-comic solution to the problem. Certainly, tyrannical systems and absolute monarchs do not exist in *Utopia* – and thus, a serious threat is no longer a concern. At the same time, it is questionable whether the Utopian citizens are actually free from this concern, or whether they are merely enslaved in another absolute system – and thus, victim to a satirical, and paradoxical, interpretation of tyranny. It is clear that their legal and political structure leaves no room for the kind of tyranny that More despises, but it certainly includes space for many Orwellian measures. This also poses the question: what difference does it make whether people are ruled by tyrants who lead with their appetite and interpret laws whichever way suits them best, or by constant surveillance, which leaves no room for privacy, let alone unrestrained freedom of political speech? In this manner, it is easy to interpret Utopia as an absolute state as well; it is merely a different, and in many ways more satirical, form of absolutism.<sup>121</sup>

Yet, as mentioned on pp. 35-6, More does not actually say that his intention is to create the perfect state with *Utopia*; his goal is to create what is, in his opinion, the best possible state in his time, namely a state that does not allow for tyrannical factions to rise to power. He presents his serio-comic proposal for solving the problems of his own commonwealth, primarily brought about by absolute monarchs, tyrants, and irrelevant political speeches, which so happens to include absolute features others might want to abolish instead. In a way then, More dismantles the absolutism of his time only to put it back together in a different form on the island of Utopia – much like Aristophanes takes apart the Athenian

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<sup>121</sup> As mentioned earlier (cf. p. 13), Wooden goes even so far to argue, “the remedies proposed [in *Utopia*] are more radical, impractical, and destructive than the evils they are intended to cure.” Wooden 1977: 43.

political and legal system throughout his comedies only to re-assemble it in one way or another at the end of the play. Consequently, in a fashion that resembles that of Aristophanes, while More's proposal certainly solves one set of problems, it also gives way to another one at the same time.<sup>122</sup>

In this manner, the nature of the question asked above remains complicated, for it is questionable whether exchanging one kind of absolutism for another is an adequate solution to the problems about which More is concerned. At the same time, it is this potentially inadequate, and satirical, solution, paired with a political-philosophical stance, which reflects the exact problems More aims to solve. Precisely, it is this mixture of the serious with the entertaining, and the 'speaking truth while he laughs and laughing while he speaks truth,'<sup>123</sup> which seems to characterise More here, that is noteworthy. It is the serio-comic response that is visible throughout *Utopia* that gives way to a discussion about other possible ways of organising society, and the measures people take, and have taken in the past, to solve the various social, political, and legal problems of their time.

#### **IV. *Utopia* in relation to ancient and modern political thought**

I mention above (p. 8) that Aristophanes, and ancient Greek culture in general, often turns to animals in times of crisis and in situations that bear new beginnings.<sup>124</sup> For instance, in *Birds*, Peisetaerus and Euelpides decide to leave Athens and live with the birds in order to escape lawsuits, debts and litigiousness – indeed, the proto-pastoral lifestyle of the birds

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<sup>122</sup> At the same time, looking at this from a slightly different point of view, this also links back to More's use of the ship of state metaphor: a counsellor should never give up because even though he may not be able to secure the good, he may at least be able to reduce the bad.

<sup>123</sup> Erasmus, *Epistolae I*, 425.45-426.46. Cf. Thompson 1974: li-lii.

<sup>124</sup> On the possible relation of Aesop's animal fables to the formation of states and creation of urban spaces, see Bloch 2004. Bloch primarily focuses on the twelfth-century, but his article makes many important points which are applicable to fifth-century Greece as well.

(already tested and approved by Tereus) seems to offer much more than life in Athens ever could. Likewise, in Plutarch's *Gryllus*, Gryllus declines Odysseus' offer to convince Circe to transform him back into a human being; he prefers being a pig because animals enjoy a much more virtuous way of life than human beings do. Comparably, Lucretius argues that the world is not created for human beings, or for their comfort, so 'riddled is it with faults.'<sup>125</sup> On the contrary, if it is made for anyone then it is animals because they are more self-sufficient and much better adapted to it than human beings are.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, in Lucian's *Gallus*, the rooster shows Micyllus that life is not as bad as he thinks it is, and that he is better off in poverty than in wealth. In this vein, we are also intended "to learn moral lessons from Aesop's animal fables: to learn from the animals"<sup>127</sup> who so often have a much better understanding of our merits and faults than we do.

As Aristotle notes, "If, however, there is anyone who holds that the study of the animals is an unworthy pursuit, he ought to go further and hold the same opinion about the study of himself" (εἰ δέ τις τὴν περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζώων θεωρίαν ἄτιμον εἶναι νενόμικε, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον οἶεσθαι χρῆ καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ).<sup>128</sup> Certainly, "animals are good to think with,"<sup>129</sup> and this is true not just for antiquity but also for the subsequent time-periods. Animals often,

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<sup>125</sup> Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2.181.

<sup>126</sup> Lucretius, 5.195-234.

<sup>127</sup> Campbell 2014: xvi.

<sup>128</sup> Aristotle, *Part. An.* 645a.

<sup>129</sup> Campbell 2014: xv. Campbell (ed.) 2014, *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*, is one of the latest works on animals in ancient intellectual culture. Other recent studies include Kurhonen and Ruonakoski (eds.) 2017, *Human and Animal in Ancient Greece: Empathy and Encounter in Classical Literature*; Johnston, Mastrocinque, and Papaioannou (eds.) 2016, *Animals in Greek and Roman Religion and Myth. Proceedings of the Symposium Grumentinum Grumento Nova (Potenza), 5-7 June 2013*; Kalof (ed.) 2007, *A Cultural History of Animals in Antiquity, Vol. 1*; Frizell (ed.) 2004, *Pecus: Man and Animal in Antiquity, Proceedings of the conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 9-12, 2002*. See also Bell and Naas (eds.) 2015, *Plato's Animals: Gadflies, Horses, Swans, and Other Philosophical Beasts* for a discussion of the role animal metaphors, allusions, analogies, and images play in the Platonic dialogues.

reflectively, offer insight into human institutions (especially, the political, legal, and social ones) and, by doing so, give way to two important questions: what makes human beings human, and how do we differ from other animals? This is especially the case for accounts which grant speech to animals and which endow them with the faculty of a human mind. For in awarding these abilities to animals, these stories “draw attention to questions about what differentiates human from animal by manipulating a standard marker of the boundary between the two categories.”<sup>130</sup> They thus provide the ideal textual space to examine questions pertaining to the qualities, habits, and culpabilities of human beings.

Additionally, animals often provide an escape to a fantastic world, which is at least initially separate from the one the author, or character, seeks to leave behind. For example, Lemuel Gulliver, similarly to Gryllus, is unable to find true happiness among the human society after his journey to the Houyhnhnms who possess far more virtue and wisdom than he could ever find in any human being. Indeed, to Gulliver, “the perfectly rational social order is not a human society but a mythical animal one.”<sup>131</sup> In this vein, as Traugott aptly puts it, “rather than shipwreck our imaginations on Circe’s island, Swift suggests that we might discover her pigs in our own parlors.”<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Orwell asserts, “humour is the debunking of humanity, and nothing is funny except in relation to human beings. Animals...are...funny because they are caricatures of ourselves.”<sup>133</sup> Drawing from these points, I argue that the finding of a truth about our own world (and of that of the protagonist) in the everyday life in a (seemingly) fantastic realm is not only “Swift’s principal satiric device – and philosophic statement,”<sup>134</sup> but also that of Aristophanes, More, Orwell, Wells, and Gilman. More

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<sup>130</sup> Lefkowitz 2014: 1.

<sup>131</sup> Higgins 1983: 529.

<sup>132</sup> Traugott 1961: 559.

<sup>133</sup> Orwell 1945, *Funny, but not Vulgar*.

<sup>134</sup> Traugott 1961: 559.

specifically, I show in this thesis that, if we connect the strands of these individual works, it becomes clear that they all reveal a notion of reality which treats life, as the authors and characters know it, as an allegory in a serio-comic manner.

Furthermore, I demonstrate that in virtually every story mentioned here, the fantastic realms and countries which are explored, recall those that are left behind at the beginning of the account in one way or another. Νεφέλοκοκκυγία starts to bear strong resemblance to Athens when Peisetaerus and Euelpides impose capricious law-codes and death penalties on its citizens, the birds. They, in turn, begin to resemble Athenian citizens, as they are swayed by empty rhetoric and promises Peisetaerus is unlikely to keep. Gryllus experiences flashbacks of the time he was a human being when Odysseus visits him on Aiaia, and when he juxtaposes the human world with that of the animals in order to convince his former companion that life is much better as a pig. Gulliver, meanwhile, is disgusted by the habits of the Yahoos because they remind him of human beings far too much for his liking; they are incapable of living up to the calm and rational society of the horses of which he thinks so highly. (And this clearly brings to mind Orwell's point made in *Funny, but not Vulgar*, that "comic verse...often depends on building up a fantastic universe which is just similar enough to the real universe to rob it of its dignity"). Furthermore, in *Animal Farm*, it is clear that both the animals and their farm humanize over the course of the story, to the extent that at the end of the narrative it is impossible to distinguish them from their human neighbours.

In this way, animals are indeed 'good to think with,' because the fantastic and satiric representation of them, their minds, and their habits in a strange and, often, faraway land, offers a fable for our time through which certain political, legal, and social concerns can be displayed all too clearly. Higgins writes similarly, "the...order of the Houyhnhnms may be

unattainable but it remains as a perpetual reproach to moderns.”<sup>135</sup> As noted above, the same can be said for the other animal societies presented here. In *Birds*, this is accentuated by the fact that the comedy features animal characters in their own rights rather than a mere animal chorus, as is, for example, the case in *Frogs*; and in *Gryllus* and *Animal Farm*, it is made clear by the point that the animals voice clearly which kind of life they actually want. The same is, of course, also true for Aesop’s fables, which clearly portray animals who have language, societal expectations, assemblies, and an understanding of politics.

The idea that the order of the Houyhnhnms, and those of the other animal societies, remains a reproach to modernity is significant; and it applies to the texts, which do not feature animals but women, or female characters, as the ‘Other’ as well. As I show in this dissertation, like the portrayal of (comic) animals, the (satiric) representation of women in state ideology and legal discourse grants a mode of investigating the problems of both antiquity and modernity. This is as true for Aristophanes’ comedies and Herodotus’ histories as it is for modern accounts of females proposing another possible way of organising society. Again, the travel theme, or the fictitious recourse to an alternate world, is relevant, as is the serio-comic narrative style of *Utopia*.<sup>136</sup>

Like Lucian, Aristophanes can be related to More and Swift when it comes to satirical portrayals of the political situation of his time. He goes further than More because he is, I believe, ultimately more of a satirist than More is, but does not go quite as far as Swift does, since his plays do not take the audience on actual voyages that far away. Furthermore, they

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<sup>135</sup> Higgins 1983: 531.

<sup>136</sup> On a discussion of both ancient and modern interpretations of the Amazon myth, see especially Blok 1995, who, in the first part of her book, situates representations of the Amazons within modern historiography. On the ancient idea of matriarchy and women in charge in Greek tradition, see for example Pembroke 1967 and Vidal-Naquet 1986. Moreover, for discussions of utopian and comic fiction in Aristophanic comedy, see Zeitlin 1999a and 1999b, Zumbrunnen 2006, and Ruffell 2011.

lack the descriptions of the customs and way of life in other societies (this is more Herodotus' style). Nonetheless, the two comedies which are especially relevant when discussing women in charge, namely *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, do offer an escape to differently organised societies, despite the fact that they take place at home in Athens.<sup>137</sup> Specifically, both plays feature a topsy-turvy world, namely a world that is, (at least for the majority of the plays), shaped by a form of gynaeocracy with reversed gender roles. In this vein, like Hythloday's and Gulliver's physical voyages, *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae* present to the audience a world of comic reversal, which is, like the meaning of the full title of *Utopia*, both an entertaining liberation from the established order and a self-reflective mirror, which shows the problems of the very society it aims to amuse.

Likewise, Herodotus' description of Argos as a strange and upside-down world where the female has overcome the male, and his depiction of the Amazons as self-sufficient warrior women, take the reader on a journey to differently organised societies that recalls the travel theme seen in More and Swift.<sup>138</sup> The same is true for Apollonius of Rhodes' portrayal of the Lemnian women, who are, at least temporarily, in charge of Lemnos. Moreover, "on each of

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<sup>137</sup> *Thesmophoriazusae* is another comedy which needs to be mentioned here because it also portrays female characters engaging with Athenian state ideology. Particularly, by referring to themselves as *demos* in the play, the women draw up a symbolic city wall in the Thesmophorian sanctuary, away from the real *demos*, thus demarcating their own community. Their experiences with religious festivals serve as a foundation for this community and their religious gatherings as a foundation for their *demos*' assemblies. The legal and political character of the comedy reaches its zenith in lines 331-71 where the women list the laws and customs of their community, which appear to be a blend of religious and civic elements. Moreover, they begin to emerge as a debating society which resembles the Athenian assembly, which is especially clear in lines 352-71 where the chorus' prayer recalls political rhetoric off stage.

<sup>138</sup> Herodotus 6.77. See also Plutarch *de Mul. Virt.* 4.245, where he tells the story of Telesilla who orders the women of Argos to defend the city and dresses them in men's clothes. This is the origin of a festival called Hybristika, which commemorates the women's courage and during which men and women wear each other's dress. See Pausanias 2.20.8-9 for a different version of that story where Telesilla calls upon everyone, not just women, to defend the city, including old men and slaves.

Gulliver's voyages we are given a particular account of education, learning, and marriage customs in the societies visited,"<sup>139</sup> and often these observations are compared to the ones Gulliver makes in his own home. Hythloday makes use of the same method when he tells his audience about Utopia, and it is clear that Herodotus uses it too. Certainly, Herodotus' accounts are intended to be more historical than More's and Swift's, and he does not employ satire, ridicule, allegory, and the fantastic with the same dexterity than they do (although he does come close in some passages), mainly because this is not his aim. The general travel theme, however, and the general storytelling of the customs of strange, and often remote, societies, which echo those of others, does connect these works.

Furthermore, I argue that the (utopian) travel theme continues to connect these ancient works with certain modern accounts which tell relatable stories. In *Herland*, Gilman explores questions pertaining to the political and social order of her time by imagining a nation of women in a remote mountain pathway whose only pass to the outside world has been sealed off a long time ago. As is the case with Herodotus' Amazons, who live more or less among themselves until the Scythian men come along, and Praxagora, who seeks to keep the outside world out by transforming Athens into one big household, and the Lemnian myth and rite, the plot of *Herland* requires the exclusion from the world outside.<sup>140</sup> More importantly, this exclusion comes to an abrupt halt when three male explorers make their way into Herland.

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<sup>139</sup> Higgins 1983: 518.

<sup>140</sup> This recalls one of the fundamental concepts of Utopia and Lycurgus' Sparta where the focus is on the society within, rather than the world outside.

In regards to the Lemnian rite, every year, in order to commemorate the crime of the Lemnian women, all fires on Lemnos were extinguished for nine days. During that time, no ship was allowed to land on the island but at the end of the nine-day period, a ship bearing new fire from Delos arrived and distributed the flame all over Lemnos. This fire was associated with restoration, which in turn was supposed to indicate the arrival of new life on the island. See Martin 1987: 89. See also Dumézil 1924: 37-39 and Burkert 1970: 6.

I demonstrate in this thesis that the men's arrival sets in motion an important plot point of the story, namely the juxtaposition of matriarchy and patriarchy; this is also the case in the ancient accounts. I show that this juxtaposition is an entertaining and effective method of illuminating not only the fifth-century fascination with other ways of organising society and gender-relations but also that of the twentieth-century. In a recent talk called *Women in Power*, given at the London Review of Books Winter Lecture, Mary Beard both started and ended with *Herland* because:<sup>141</sup>

it nicely raises some of the topics that [are] on the agenda [here] – from imaginary communities of women doing things their way to bigger questions of knowing how we recognise female power under the sometimes funny and sometimes honestly frightening stories that we tell ourselves about female power, and indeed have told ourselves about it in the West at least for thousands of years.

Indeed, as is the case in *Animal Farm*, which brings to mind many of the concerns raised in Aristophanes' *Birds*, *Herland* re-addresses some of the points made in *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiastusae* as well as in Herodotus' account of the Amazons and Apollonius' version of the myth of the Lemnian women. In this manner, I argue that, like the animal fictions, *Herland*, in conjunction with its ancient counterparts, raises important questions about the merits and faults of female power and, as Beard points out, about the 'sometimes funny and sometime frightening' aspects with which female power is associated. More importantly, it highlights a phenomenon, which shapes, either directly or indirectly, the comedies, the

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<sup>141</sup> Beard, *Women in Power*, London Review of Books Winter Lecture, 6 March 2017. I listened to Beard's lecture after both this part of the introduction and the section on *Herland* had been written. I am pleased to say that we have both, independently of one another, decided to use *Herland* (and its sequel *With Her in Ourland*) and compare it to ancient accounts of 'women in power.' I revised both sections appropriately and included aspects of her talk in order to acknowledge my debt to her, where her research has enhanced my own. Meanwhile, her new book, *Women & Power: A Manifesto*, came out shortly before I submitted this thesis, and after everything had been written, and therefore could not be considered.

historical account, and the myth: gynaecocratic leaderships are ephemeral, and the eventual return to a more patriarchal social order is inevitable. In this vein, I demonstrate that both the ancient and modern texts end up giving way to an expression, and even justification, of the inescapable reality of the patriarchal status quo, which looms over the characters' heads throughout the story.

In this way, the discussion of female societies continues to join the dialogue presented in the analyses of the animal communities and *Utopia*. It shows that instead of enabling us to leave behind perceptions of our own world, the fantastic realms guide us towards them yet again as soon as we have spent some time there, which in turn makes clear that, often, strange and faraway lands are not as strange and faraway as they may seem. Additionally, I show that both the ancient and the modern accounts of women in power all share the same basic pattern: at one point in each story, women rule and men have either vanished, sunk to the bottom of the hierarchy, or are otherwise unimportant. In each narrative, things go well for a while – sometimes even for two-thousand years, as is the case in *Herland*. Eventually, however, chaos ensues, caused by either men's absence or female rule in general. The solution to the problem is the same in nearly all accounts: reunite men and women and renew the patriarchal status quo, at least on a social level.<sup>142</sup> In this manner, as is the case in *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, the audience is taken home at the end of the tale.

These endings may be disappointing to some, but they also have the potential to point at something else. Specifically, I argue that the collective power of these narratives portray not only women and animals at times of crisis and at moments of foundation and revolution

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<sup>142</sup> Granted, in *Ecclesiazusae*, this does not exactly happen because the play ends with a celebration of the gynaecocratic regime. However, I suggest that the comparison with other ancient accounts allows us to propose that the same return to the status quo will eventually take place in the comedy as well, even if it does not happen within the actual timeframe of the play.

but they also play into the historic conflict between matriarchal and patriarchal regimes, and into the continuous conflict between different (and often unsuccessful) proposals for the (re-) structuring of society. Like *Utopia* and *Gulliver's Travels*, these stories are then assimilated to a debate about not only democracy, different types of social orders with alternative leadership styles, and various attempts to refine law, but also about which political system is ultimately the best one. Furthermore, I argue that these stories imply that the past is inevitably contained in the future, as we are presented with ever-recurring cycles of political conflict. I will demonstrate in this thesis that this is done by portraying either the return to a previously discarded social order or by showing the recurrence of political and legal problems, which cannot seem to be avoided no matter how hard one may try.

The last point is elaborated especially well by the dismantlement of society seen in Aristophanes' *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, Plato's *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias* as well as More's *Utopia*, Wells' *The Time Machine* and Orwell's *Animal Farm*. For example, in the myth of the reversed cosmos in the *Statesman*, the Stranger demonstrates that political conflicts perpetually repeat themselves by showing that the cosmos exchanges (a) for (b) on a regular basis, and that we are subject to an eternal cycle of reversal of times. Likewise, in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* we hear a story about an Athens that undergoes recurrent periods of foundation and destruction. Similarly, Wells' time traveller observes things that remind him of the past when travelling several hundred-thousand years into the future: the buildings he sees in the year 802,701 remind him of those of the Phoenicians and the Sphinx. Furthermore, as already stated above, both Aristophanes and More may take apart their respective polities over the course of their stories but they always put them back together once they reach the end of the story; and often the characters end up right where they started. It is clear that the same concept applies to Orwell's *Animal Farm*: at the end of the tale, the

animals' farm is undistinguishable from the one they seek to reform at the beginning of the account.

In addition to the anniversaries listed earlier, these points continue to pull the strands of the ancient and modern texts together because they all show seemingly unbreakable political and social cycles, continuous oscillation and re-evaluation of the law, and characters who always seem to end up right where they started. The emphasis is, as stated earlier, on rhetoric, especially legal language (and the misuse thereof) of characters who either systematically exploit and manipulate a collective people (represented by animals and female characters) for their own advantage or who offer a satirical solution to certain political and social problems, which is grounded in the legal language of their time. I argue that this emphasis continues to show that it is not hard to find parallels between their time and our own, where deceptive rhetoric is under increasing scrutiny worldwide, as is the question who has the right to speak and who does not. It also shows, in another timely manner, that the right to speak does not necessarily include the ability (and willingness) to contribute effectively to political debate, and that skilful articulate speech is often at risk of being silenced or dismissed as inept.<sup>143</sup>

As stated at the beginning of this section, I aim to demonstrate in this thesis the ways in which the ancient and modern texts can be compared, particularly in important political,

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<sup>143</sup> In many important ways, the unwillingness and inability to contribute effectively to political discourse is more Huxleyan than Orwellian. Postman writes: "What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy...In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us." Postman 1985: xix-xx.

juridical, and rhetorical respects. I do this in order to examine how different characters respond to, and engage with, different forms of power in an environment that at least begins as democratic. As pointed out earlier, I argue that this study enables us to trace not only the development of (Western) political thought over the last two-thousand years but also to challenge and interrogate difficult political, juridical, and rhetorical problems, which seem to recur consistently throughout time.

## **V. Synopsis of the thesis**

I begin my discussion in the first chapter, 'Rhetorical Paradigms and Cyclical Themes in Aeschylus, Plato, and Wells,' by examining the theme of change and notions of ascent and descent in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincitus*. Looking at the characters' rhetoric, I argue that, while Zeus may be the legitimate ruler in the tragedy, his rule is not eternal and will be altered in the next play, *Prometheus Unbound*. I then analyse the ascent of man to which the play clearly refers and the Protagorean reliance on the human intellect, rather than on a divine anchor, that simultaneously arises with mankind. The sophistic view that human intellect is self-sufficient leads on to a series of questions, such as 'how should we live?' and 'what does it mean for our political, legal, and social system when we rely exclusively on reason and rhetoric?' The significance of these questions is especially highlighted by the discussions about rhetoric and political existence found in the *Gorgias*, the *Statesman*, the *Protagoras*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias*.

In particular, the analysis of the themes found in *PV* feeds into a discussion of Plato's critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*; the importance of the myth of the reversed cosmos and the ways in which different factions engage with one another in the *Statesman*; the consequences

of the limits of human reason in the *Protagoras*; and the significance of the recurrent cycles of ascent and descent in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*. I end the chapter with a discussion of Wells' *The Time Machine*, which not only continues to highlight the idea that we are subject to recurrent circles, but also offers a symbolic answer to the question what might happen when we fail to acknowledge the boundaries of the human intellect.

The second chapter, 'Rhetorical Strategies and State Formation in Aristophanes and Orwell,' begins with an analysis of Tereus' and Peisetaerus' use of distinct political rhetoric in Aristophanes' *Birds*, which enables the construction of νεφελοκοκκυγία. Looking at Tereus' role as a Greek teacher (influenced by his tragic past), I argue that he serves as an agent of speech who decides who has the right to speak and who does not, which allows him to create a window into the gap between the right to speak and the right to be heard. The birds are able to speak Greek; however, they neither use that skill to defend themselves nor to unravel the real meaning behind Peisetaerus' flattering rhetoric. Instead, they are swayed by deceptive speech, which leads them to accept Peisetaerus' proposal optimistically, not knowing that it will not bode well for all of them.

In the subsequent sections of chapter 2, I analyse the problematic nature of the law code of νεφελοκοκκυγία. It is not clear whether the birds' laws are based on an ancient law code (as Peisetaerus claims they are) or whether Peisetaerus creates them on a whim. These uncertainties contribute to the dubious and, potentially, arbitrary legal structure of the birds' city. However, I also show how these uncertainties (in true Aristophanic style) are balanced by a great comic sense, which offers the opportunity to laugh at utter human failure in a way that is distressed by an equally great sense of despair.

In this way, Aristophanes' *Birds* is comparable with Orwell's *Animal Farm*: like the comic playwright, Orwell satirically exposes false optimism and the oxymoronic nature of

tyranny by portraying animals who are unable to question political decrees properly, rashly surrender power, and who fall victim to leaders who misuse rhetoric. Additionally, both Aristophanes and Orwell express that exchanging one political system for another is not necessarily a positive undertaking because it only contributes to the, often negative, oscillation of law-making and continuous regeneration of politics.

The use (and misuse) of rhetoric to influence a specific community feeds into the discussion presented in the third chapter, 'Female Deliberative Rhetoric and State Ideology in Aristophanes and Gilman.' I begin by analysing the way in which Lysistrata rallies the women to announce that the future of Greece is in their hands, and continue by examining the dialogue between Lysistrata and the Proboulos. I argue that their exchange emerges as a political spectacle, where one side fails to understand the other, which brings to mind real political speeches off stage that are also informed by miscomprehension and miscommunication. Like the moral of *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, their dialogue makes clear that the masses must not fall prey to empty rhetoric but that they must learn to see rhetoric for what it really is.

In the next part of chapter 3, I analyse the misuse of rhetoric in *Ecclesiazusae* and show how Praxagora appropriates masculine rhetorical strategies in order to exploit feelings of discomfort caused by problematic Athenian political affairs. While Lysistrata also adopts male political discourse, I argue that Praxagora's rhetoric is ultimately more destructive because it alters the fundamental nature of Athens, at least temporarily. Furthermore, I demonstrate that Praxagora uses legal language which is anchored deeply in the political and legal world of early fourth-century Athens. This demonstration is important because it shows, in combination with an analysis of the changes made to the Athenian legal system in the late fifth and early fourth-century, that the foundation of Praxagora's regime, while dubious in

some ways, is not quite as illegitimate as it may seem and therefore might just work, at least in theory.

In the subsequent sections of chapter 3, I assert that the ending of *Ecclesiazusae* recalls many of the points made earlier: the Athenians accept a political proposal full of discomfiting indications, which imply that Praxagora is not the great leader she claims she is but yet another scoundrel. Nonetheless, I also argue that the language of Blepyrus suggests that Praxagora's regime is bound to fail and that power will eventually go back to the Athenian men. I emphasise this point by examining other stories which depict women in charge (specifically, Herodotus' account of the Amazons and Apollonius' version of the myth of the Lemnian women), which portray temporary gynaecocracies, and which suggest that Praxagora's rule is ephemeral as well.

I end the chapter with a discussion of *Herland*, which highlights my argument that a return to origins is unavoidable. I show that Gilman, like Aristophanes, More and Orwell, dismantles her own society, which, both entertainingly and unsettlingly, points at its shortcomings. By portraying three male explorers in a gynaecocratic setting, she juxtaposes matriarchy and patriarchy and, as is the case in Herodotus and Aristophanes, she looks at both concepts through the eyes of the 'Other.' I further argue that Gilman is interested in envisioning a better world, which is established by the integration of different polarities. However, as is the case in the other texts, this integration is not as balanced as she hopes it will be, for it once again brings everything back to the world it seeks to escape at the beginning of the story.

I conclude the thesis not by recapitulating everything that has been said, but rather by showing how the cyclical movements discussed in it are still of relevance today, and how the

powers and limitations of rhetoric are still just as troublesome in modern political discourse, as they were during the times of Aristophanes and Plato.

## CHAPTER 1

### Rhetorical Paradigms and Cyclical Themes in Aeschylus, Plato, and Wells

#### **I. The cyclical nature of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincitus***

This chapter examines the theme of change and circular notions of ascent and descent which characterise this thesis in fundamental ways, and it explores the underlying reasons behind these movements. I examine political change, legal reforms, and rhetoric in Aeschylus, Plato, and Wells and draw from different epistemologies (tragedy, philosophy, and science fiction) in order to present case studies that go to the root of the political and legal issues analysed in the next chapters. I show that these cases are informed by the virtues and vices of rhetoric, its powers and its limitations, and similar oscillating elements found in law-making and political debate. In this vein, they inform the comparative literary approach of this thesis, as they present parallels between political upheavals across time and space.

The inevitability of change is a central theme in *Prometheus Vincitus*. Like the political imagery in More's *Utopia*, which, as discussed in the introduction, expresses part of the Greek legacy to Western culture, the imagery in *PV* echoes not only the past and the present but it also foreshadows the future. Especially, the talk of the new regime and the annulment of the previous one, as well as the allusions to Zeus eventually suffering shipwreck, are all part of a cycle. It is a cycle which recalls the assertions made in the introduction, namely that the past is inexorably contained in the future and that law oscillates continuously. In Zeus' case, this means that what he has done (i.e. dissolve the former regime and establish new laws) will be done to him as well at some point. In this vein, the imagery in *PV* also belongs to the wider

categories of ascent and descent, both of which embody cyclical features reminiscent of the other.<sup>144</sup>

The imagery of ascent and descent is accentuated especially well when we situate the figures of Zeus and Prometheus in the tragedy in the centre of a trilogy. It is clear that the scholarly debate regarding the question whether or not there was a trilogy, and which play was at the beginning and which at the end, is large and difficult, mostly because of lost information and the poor state of the existing evidence.<sup>145</sup> However, I am inclined to agree with Griffith who argues that there once was a trilogy consisting of *Prometheus Firebearer* (*Pyrphoros*), *Prometheus Bound*, and *Prometheus Unbound* – and in the following paragraphs, I presume that this really was the case, and also in that order.<sup>146</sup> Drawing from

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<sup>144</sup> See Lebeck 1971: 1, who uses similar terms when describing the imagery in the *Oresteia*.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Mossman 1996: 61.

<sup>146</sup> Griffith 1983: 281-4. Cf. Pohlenz 1930: 72: “Danach müssen wir schließen, daß der Pyrphoros, der sicher mit den beiden andren Stücken verbunden war, nicht den Fackelträger bedeutete sondern den Feuerbringer, und daß er nicht das letzte sondern das erste Stück der Trilogie bildete.” (Cf. Pohlenz 1930: 70-1). He refutes the *Scholia on Prometheus* 94, which asserts that *Pyrphoros* was the third play, and Westphal 1869: 222, who argues that πυρφόρος refers to the festival of the Prometheia at the end of the trilogy because elsewhere it ‘always means ‘equipped with fire’ or ‘carrying a torch’. Cf. Herington 1963a: 189 and 1963b: 242.

Yet, says Fitton-Brown 1959: 52, “that does not prove that it means it here, for Euripides’ title ‘Ἰππόλυτος Στεφανηφόρος surely means not ‘Hippolytus Garlanded’, ‘equipped with a garland’, but ‘Hippolytus bringing the garland’...in any case, the Greek for ‘fire-bringing’ is presumably πυρφόρος. Since titles, ancient and modern, and whether chosen by the author or another, are designed to capture the salient feature or scene for identification purposes, *Purphoros* would perhaps be applied most naturally to the bringing of fire to man at the beginning of the story.” See also West 1979: 131.

Winnington-Ingram 1983: 188 argues that *PV* is the first play, because “the whole technique of exposition is appropriate only to the first play of a trilogy;” but in my opinion that view does not provide us with a satisfying sequence of events. Further, I am not sure whether *Prometheus Pyrphoros* can convincingly be linked to the satyr-drama *Prometheus Pyrkaeus*, produced together with *Persians* in 472 (Sommerstein 2008: 439; Dodds 1973: 39).

I am neither convinced by the idea of a Prometheus dilogy (West 1994: 131) nor by the view that *PV* was an independent play (Yoon 2016), because it would disturb the sequence noted in n. 147, which (in my opinion) informs the drama. I do believe that Pohlenz, Fitton-Brown, West, and Griffith make a convincing case when they argue for a *Prometheia* trilogy and when they place *Prometheus Pyrphoros* at the beginning of it and *PV* in the centre. This also fits in with the trilogy’s theme of ascent and descent.

this assumption, we can make the following general assertions: the story begins with the rise of Prometheus (and mankind), and the fall of Zeus (in that he loses exclusive rights to fire) in the first play. It continues with the fall of Prometheus and the rise of Zeus (as new tyrant) in the second play; and the third play portrays Prometheus' rise and Zeus' fall (in that his plans to rule as an autocrat are thwarted).<sup>147</sup> Again, the cyclical and oscillatory imagery is evident, and it is this imagery (which I will discuss in more detail below) that enables us to at least try "to make sense of patterns of events."<sup>148</sup> This in turn underlines one of the main rationales of this thesis, as outlined in the introduction.

When looking closely, it is clear that there is also a sequence of ascending and descending cycles within *PV* itself, which adds to the general assertions made above. Specifically, the descent of Prometheus is pointed out in lines 8-9; 96-7; 248-256; 409; 474; 561-608; 999; 1007-1035; 1050-3; 1071-93, and the rise of Zeus in lines 12-13 and 402-5. The following lines simultaneously point at Prometheus' descent and Zeus' ascent: 146-151 and 304-11; and these ones concurrently allude to Prometheus' ascent and Zeus' fall (or, compromise) in the third play: 189 and 522-5. Furthermore, Zeus' fall is exclusively alluded to in lines 167; 171-3; 518; 760; 909-10; 930-1; 948, while lines 938-4 emphasise both his rise and eventual fall at the same time. Prometheus' ascent, meanwhile, is noted in lines 213; 325-339; 507-10 and 772 while lines 270-8 reinforce both his ascent and descent at the same

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<sup>147</sup> In this vein, "on Griffith's analysis the trilogy would present us with a satisfying sequence: (first play) Crime: (second play): Punishment: (third play) Regeneration." Mossman 1996: 61-2 n. 15. West 1979: 132 argues likewise: "if *Pyrph.* came first, it dealt with Prometheus' theft of fire. The play of the trilogy was then Crime-Punishment-Reconciliation. This, and not Punishment-Reconciliation- (?), is surely the scheme that would naturally have occurred to the poet." See also Pohlentz 1930: 71.

<sup>148</sup> Lakoff and Turner 1989: 159. "...Prometheus' emotional movement from despair to renewed self-respect," which can be traced in *PV*, also belongs to the rubric of ascent and descent. Mossman 1996: 62.

time. Lastly, man's ascent is stated in lines 248-256 (at the same time as Prometheus' descent is mentioned), 436-471, 476-506 and 613-4.

These sequences reinforce both the recurrent patterns of events as well as the theme of change, both of which characterise the trilogy. 'Ascent' and 'descent', as seen above, are scattered across the tragedy with virtually no separation; they are constantly stated simultaneously in regards to different characters while referring to past, present and future events. These references, which are situated within the oscillatory patterns of the play, are also part of a bigger imagery that has especially to do with mankind. Precisely, they are part of the imagery that informs the question, 'how should we live,' which then ties into the intellectual enquiries seen in fifth- and fourth-century Greece and into social and political theory in general.<sup>149</sup> The event that serves as the catalyst for that question is man's ascent from a cave-dwelling being to an articulate political thinker, triggered by Prometheus in the first play of the trilogy.

In an often-cited passage in Diogenes Laertius, Protagoras states: 'man is the measure of all things' (πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος).<sup>150</sup> Hall argues, "Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Creon in *Antigone* might both have been listening to Protagoras when they assume that they can rely exclusively on their own, human intelligence in order to solve major problems of statecraft."<sup>151</sup> I think Prometheus might have been listening as well, as it is clear that the temporary defeat of Zeus in the first play, set in motion by Prometheus' gifts to mankind, affects the role the gods play in human development. For along with mankind's

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<sup>149</sup> Cf. Hall 2010a: 174.

<sup>150</sup> Diogenes Laertius, 9.8.51. Cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 152a.

<sup>151</sup> Hall 2010a: 179. Cf. Farrar 1988: 48, "the point [for Protagoras] was not to argue for a different account of the world...but to claim that truth and knowledge are grounded in human experience, and relative to human concerns." See also Farrar 1988: 49, "for Protagoras, man the measurer is both what we would call a 'sensing' and a 'judging' being, and his standard is his own..."

ascent, their assumption that it is sufficient to trust their human intellect alone and nothing else arises as well. Herrick writes:<sup>152</sup>

this assumption marks a profound change in thought, for it indicates that the Greek public gradually rejected the idea that human destiny was shaped by the gods, and accepted in its place a new notion: human destiny is shaped by human rationality and persuasive speech.

This unadulterated (Protagorean) trust in the human intellect poses more questions, namely whether “that social development [that follows from it] has any fixed foundations, is actually beneficial, or offers any insight into how humans *ought* to behave. If there is no place for the gods in human development, what kind of anchor can there be for Greek ethics?”<sup>153</sup>

The language used in the tragedy to refer to Prometheus’ gifts, which, among others, include speech, reason, arithmetic, and the ability to form communities and establish laws and political institutions, reinforces the significance of these questions, as do the Platonic dialogues discussed later on in this chapter.<sup>154</sup> Specifically, it is the political and legal language that exists within the cyclical imagery discussed above, that allows us to address the potential consequences to which the answers to these questions may lead. For instance, as the Protagorean image of the ascent of man triumphs in the tragedy, reason, rhetoric and arithmetic (which includes the ‘measurement’ of speeches, as I will demonstrate in the section on Plato’s *Protagoras*), experience a triumphant moment as well, which becomes especially clear when linking these skills to the question posed above, ‘how should we live?’.

It is the combined force of these skills that not only brings to mind Plato’s Gorgias’ definition of rhetoric (‘the ability to persuade others with speeches to do or think what you

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<sup>152</sup> Herrick 1997: 33.

<sup>153</sup> Ruffell 2012: 75-6.

<sup>154</sup> *PV* 506. *πᾶσαι τέχναι βροτοῖσιν ἐκ Προμηθέως*. (“know that all the skills that mortals have come from Prometheus”).

want them to’),<sup>155</sup> but also the cyclical nature of law-making and exchange of opinions in fifth-century and early fourth-century Greece to which *PV* clearly alludes. After all, when one man can use rhetoric to persuade his audience to think one way, another one can use it to persuade them to think another way. As the sophists say, every *logos* can be met with an *antilogos*.<sup>156</sup> This reflects Aristotle’s observation of the sophists at *Eth. Nic* 1181a when he notes that they are ignorant of the nature of politics and the subject matters with which it deals; otherwise, they would not identify it with rhetoric or even subordinate it to rhetoric (οὐ γὰρ ἂν τὴν αὐτὴν τῇ ῥητορικῇ οὐδὲ χεῖρω ἐτίθεσαν). The sophists, Strauss writes (and he draws from *Eth. Nic.* 1181a here), “believed that it is ‘easy’ to discharge well the non-rhetorical functions of government and to acquire the knowledge needed for this purpose: the only political art to be taken seriously is rhetoric.”<sup>157</sup>

The sophistic notion of rhetoric illuminates the enactment and establishment of laws and the consequences of certain speeches and actions, which in turn can trigger moments of ascent and descent; and it is clear that *PV* is packed with both. It is now time that we turn to this rhetorical legal imagery and examine how it continuously recalls the major themes of the

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<sup>155</sup> *Gorg.* 452e. Cf. Hall 2010a: 181. On the note of triumph, see also *Antigone* 322: πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἄνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει. ‘Many things arouse awe, but none is more awesome than man.’

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Farrar 1988: 63. “Protagoras was infamous in antiquity for his ability to argue both sides of any question (DK 89 A20), and to ‘make the weaker argument (*logos*) the stronger’ (DK 89 A21).” This ability (and promise to instruct students to do the same) is condemned by Aristotle at *Rhet.* 1402a.

<sup>157</sup> Strauss 1964: 17. Cf. Strauss 1964: 23, “the sophists – believing in the omnipotence of speech – were blind to the sternness of politics.”

Later, Lucian creates comic material from Prometheus’ influence on the sophists. See Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 6, who writes, “in his dialogue *Prometheus*, Lucian depicts the Titan as a mirror image of himself: Prometheus delivers a ‘sophistic lecture’ in the Caucasus Mountains to Hermes and Hephaestus...” As Hermes says to Prometheus at 4: τὴν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ δὴ ταύτην σχολὴν καλῶς ἂν ἔχον εἴη εἰς ἀκρόασιν καταχρήσασθαι σοφιστικὴν, οἷος εἶ σὺ πανουργότατος ἐν τοῖς λόγοις. (“This interval of leisure may as well be employed in listening to a sophistic speech, as you are a very clever scoundrel at speech-making”).

trilogy discussed above. This discussion also paves the way for the next sections, which address how the role of persuasive rhetoric and human intellect in the *Gorgias*, the *Statesman*, and the *Protagoras* tie into the themes of the trilogy, the aim to make sense of legal reforms and deliberative rhetoric, and thus also into the question, ‘how should we live and how should we behave?’.

## II. The use of cyclical legal and constitutional imagery in *Prometheus Vincitus*

As noted above, the themes of ascent, descent, and recurrent change tie into the discussions about the establishment and enactment of laws. They also connect with the basic narrative of the play, which “is concerned with tyranny and rebellion...the presentation (and critique) of the gods and the presentation of autocratic rule,” and it addresses “questions of legitimacy and the relationship between ruler and ruled.”<sup>158</sup> The latter is especially emphasised by the Protagorean notion of man’s ascent from a cave-dweller to a political being found in Prometheus’ words at 452-3. He says before he came along, mankind “dwelt underground, like tiny ants, in the sunless recesses of caves” (κατώρυχες δ’ ἔναιον ὥστ’ ἀήσυροι μύρμηκες ἄντρων ἐν μυχοῖς ἀνηλίοις). As man moves up and develops as political being, the debate about political and juridical practices in different polities and various applications of power develops alongside him – this development can be traced in *PV* as well, which is in the end also “a study of the nature and application of power.”<sup>159</sup>

The description of Zeus’ power at the beginning of the play is especially noteworthy here. At lines 148-51, the Chorus assert:

νέοι γὰρ οἰακονόμοι  
κρατοῦσ’, Ὀλύμπου: νεοχμοῖς

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<sup>158</sup> Ruffell 2012: 25.

<sup>159</sup> Ruffell 2012: 29.

δὲ δὴ νόμοις Ζεὺς ἀθέτως κρατύνει.  
τὰ πρὶν δὲ πελώρια νῦν ἀιστοῖ.

New rulers wield the helm on Olympus,  
and Zeus rules arbitrarily by new-made laws;  
what once was mighty he now casts into oblivion.

The words νεοχμός (and νεοχμούω) and ἀιστόω connect with the assertion made previously about the cyclical nature of the play. On the one hand, νεοχμός points at the newness of Zeus' regime and at the change that has taken place between the end of the first play and the beginning of this one. ἀιστόω emphasises this by making clear that the regime from the first play has been annulled and that its laws and rulers are 'no longer seen.' On the other hand, these words also have the potential to hint at the future of the new regime and assert that this regime, too, will become unseen at some point and replaced by another one. This connects with both the arrival of rhetoric mentioned earlier and the meaning of νεοχμούω, which, like the Latin *novae res*, often means 'to make political innovations';<sup>160</sup> this in turn reinforces the idea that what Zeus has done will be done to him as well at some point. ἄθετος, meanwhile, suggests that the ways in which Zeus has annulled the previous regime and established the new one, were not legitimate but unsuitable. This reflects the questionable status of his authority that shines through the play, but also the debate about different political and judicial practices in different places.

The legal language that follows in the next passages characterizes both notions. Let us begin by looking at the descriptions of Zeus' status in the tragedy. The words used show that he is indeed a tyrannical οἰακονόμος who steers his way through Olympus just like an absolute monarch might 'sail' through the city without any properly established laws. For instance, at lines 403-4, the Chorus remark, ἀμέγαρτα...τάδε Ζεὺς ἰδίῳ νόμοις κρατύνων.

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<sup>160</sup> Griffith 1983: 117.

(‘Zeus, exercising this unlimited control under laws of his own making’), thereby making clear that Zeus governs with personal laws which he can alter anytime he wishes.<sup>161</sup> The relentless attitude that comes with Zeus’ appointment of laws is, amongst others, described in line 164: ὁ δ’ ἐπικότως ἀεὶ θέμενος ἄγναμπτον νόον. (‘He, with constant anger, making his resolve inflexible’).<sup>162</sup> His malicious nature is exacerbated by his hard-heartedness, which the chorus point out in line 160: τίς ὧδε τλησικάρδιος θεῶν, ὅτω τάδ’ ἐπιχαρῆ; (‘What god is so hard-hearted as to take delight in this’)?<sup>163</sup> Hermes’ words in line 981 reinforce this point: ὦμοι; τόδε Ζεὺς τοῦπος οὐκ ἐπίσταται. Zeus does not know the word ‘alas’.<sup>164</sup>

These tyrannical characteristics are further underlined by Prometheus’ words in lines 224-5 where he makes clear that Zeus does not only oppress his enemies but also his friends.

He says:

ὁ τῶν θεῶν τύραννος ὠφελημένος  
κακαῖσι ποιναῖς ταῖσδὲ μ’ ἐξημείψατο.  
ἔνεστι γάρ πως τοῦτο τῇ τυραννίδι  
νόσημα, τοῖς φίλοισι μὴ πεποιθέναι.

Such are the benefits that the autocrat of the gods has received from me, and this is the evil reward with which he has recompensed me! It seems that this malady is built into autocracy, that of not trusting one’s friends.

τυραννίδι νόσημα is particularly noteworthy here because it points out that this is the (moral) disease that automatically comes with the establishment of any tyranny, namely the loss of trust in your friends and political loyalties.<sup>165</sup> This theme is reiterated shortly later in lines

<sup>161</sup> Trans. Griffith. See lines 49-50 for a description of the unrestrained freedom that comes with this position.

<sup>162</sup> See also lines 34 and 160.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *PV*, 187-8.

<sup>164</sup> *PV*, 166 and 981.

<sup>165</sup> A similar statement can also be found in Aristotle’s *Pol.* 5.1313b, where he compares monarchy with tyranny and says, καὶ ἡ μὲν βασιλεία σῶζεται διὰ τῶν φίλων, τυραννικὸν δὲ τὸ μάλιστα ἀπιστεῖν τοῖς φίλοις, ὡς βουλομένων μὲν πάντων δυναμένων δὲ μάλιστα τούτων. (‘...Whereas friends are a means of security to royalty, it is a mark of a tyrant to be extremely

306-8 when Prometheus greets Oceanus with the words: δέρκου θέαμα, τόνδε τὸν Διὸς φίλον, τὸν συγκαταστήσαντα τὴν τυραννίδα, οἷαις ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πημοναῖσι κάμπτομαι. “Behold the spectacle, then – me, the friend of Zeus, who helped establish his autocracy, what torments I am now racked with at his hands.” Prometheus, the former friend of Zeus, is now forced to submit to him after helping him establish his sovereign status. These lines demonstrate both Prometheus’ disgust at the way Zeus treats him (like a mere spectacle, θέαμα) and Zeus’ tyrannical definition of friendship (ἀπιστεῖν τοῖς φίλοις), which can also be found in Aristotle (see n. 165).

The freedom of speech is also restricted in Zeus’ tyranny, which is highlighted by Hephaestus’ and Kratos’ conversation in lines 66-68:

Ηφ.

αἰαῖ, Προμηθεῦ, σῶν ὑπερστένω πόνων.

Κρ.

σὸ δ’ αὖ κατοκνεῖς τῶν Διός τ’ ἐχθρῶν ὑπερ  
στένεις; ὅπως μὴ σαυτὸν οἰκτιεῖς ποτε.

Heph.

Ah, Prometheus, I groan for your sufferings!

Kr.

Hesitating again, are you? Grieving for the enemies of Zeus? Take care you don’t have cause to pity yourself, one of these days!

Kratos advises Hephaestus to be careful with his words because taking pity with the tyrant’s enemy (i.e. Prometheus) is unlikely to bode well. At the end of the day, this kind of behaviour will only lead to a situation where Hephaestus will have to pity himself as well because then it

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distrustful of his friends, on the ground that, while all have the wish, these chiefly have the power”).

might be he who is chained to the rock. This warning fits in with the cyclical nature of the trilogy as well as with the theme of ascent and descent: while it is not Zeus who is portrayed as the future victim in this passage but Hephaestus, it does imply that the tables can be turned anytime. At the same time, it also highlights the restriction of speech in Zeus' tyranny, which brings to mind the following (presumed) fragment from *Prometheus Pyrphoros*: σιγῶνθ' ὅπου δεῖ καὶ λέγων τὰ καίρια. ('keeping silent where one should and speaking to the point').<sup>166</sup>

The tyrannical features of Zeus' regime are perhaps best summarised by Prometheus in lines 735-7: ὁ τῶν θεῶν τύραννος ἐς τὰ πάνθ' ὁμῶς βίαιος εἶναι ("the autocrat of the gods is equally brutal in all his dealings").<sup>167</sup> Like in any other tyranny, Prometheus does not have any choice but to submit to Zeus, accept the new regime, and repent his crime. The implications of this task are highlighted three hundred lines later by Oceanus' advice:<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *PP* fr. 208 N = 351 M, Aulus Gellius *NA* 13.19.4. See Griffith 1983: 283, who says that this "line is almost identical to Aesch. *Cho.* 582 σιγᾶν δ' ὅπου δεῖ καὶ λέγειν τὰ καίρια, and it is possible that the attribution is mistaken (πυρφόροι for χοηφόροις...)." Both, however, emphasise the point made above.

It is worth noting that the instruction to keep silent is, in some way, contradictory to the 'new regime talk.' Precisely, it brings to mind the *old* education praised by the Strong Argument in *Clouds*, which refers to the instalment of absolute silence in young men (963). In this vein, it readily recalls Spartan (and Utopian) education, which, as noted in the introduction, teaches the same. See David 1999: 119, who writes on the Spartan notion of silence, "In the course of the upbringing as well as in adult life silence...was a basic tool for discipline, self-restraint, uniformity and conformity. On the psychological level, one of the main reasons for this multi-purpose instrumentality is the very suppression of the self required by silence; on the sociological level, its integrative and authoritarian power... .The Spartan system of building up communication skills put a special emphasis on learning when, where, why and how not to talk, and the proper amount of talk versus silence." Cf. David 1999: 136 n. 7 and Ducat 2006: 36.

The muddling of old education elements and new regime features emphasises the oscillatory pattern of *PV* as well as the intertextual allusions to the previous play and the subsequent one. At the same time, the arguable contradiction also underlines the point made above, namely that the fragment may not be from *Pyrphoros*, but from a different play.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Griffith 1983: 220. "Zeus' rule, based on force, is characterized by violence, lawlessness, treachery, and lechery, all the traditional qualities of the 'bad tyrant'..." See also Fitton-Brown 1959: 57.

<sup>168</sup> *PV* 308-12.

καὶ παραινέσαι γέ σοι  
θέλω τὰ λῶστα, καίπερ ὄντι ποικίλῳ.  
γίγνωσκε σαυτὸν καὶ μεθάρμοσαι τρόπους  
νέους: νέος γὰρ καὶ τύραννος ἐν θεοῖς.

and I also want to give you advice, the best advice, cunning though you are. Know yourself and change to a new pattern of behaviour, because there is also a new autocrat in the gods' realm.

Oceanus urges Prometheus to be pragmatic and “to change with the times,”<sup>169</sup> which again recalls the recurrent notion of change (μεθαρμόζω) and newness (νέος) that informs the trilogy. It also reinforces the first two parts of the sequence (see n. 147), namely crime and punishment, and the low state to which Prometheus has descended. He has gone from triumphant fire-bearer in the first play to defeated prisoner in the second play who is ‘left here to wither, bound to this rock// by these degrading bonds of adamant’ (πέτραις προσαναινόμενον ταῖσδ’ ἀδαμαντοδέτοισι λύμαις).<sup>170</sup> It is a descent which he has not yet quite grasped, according to Oceanus.

As Oceanus urges Prometheus to acknowledge the new patterns and change his behaviour accordingly, he also alludes to the restricted freedom of speech already mentioned earlier. In his opinion, the adaptation of a different kind of speech is necessary, as the old one is not suitable for this regime. It is, after all, the use of wrong speech at the wrong time, which brought about Prometheus' descent in the first place: τοιαῦτα μέντοι τῆς ἄγαν ὑψηγόρου γλώσσης, Προμηθεῦ, τὰπίχειρα γίγνεται (“but these, Prometheus, *are* the wages of an over-arrogant tongue”).<sup>171</sup> This brings to mind the point made previously, namely that rhetoric works both ways. While it can be used to help a regime arise (and convince the audience to think one way), it can also be used to destroy another one (and persuade the audience to think

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<sup>169</sup> Griffith 1983: 144.

<sup>170</sup> *PV* 146-7.

<sup>171</sup> *PV* 318-9.

another way); this emphasises both the recurring nature of arguments and the language of the tragedy.<sup>172</sup>

Furthermore, Oceanus' words show that hubris and grandiloquence usually have consequences, especially in a tyranny. This brings to mind a point made by More (cf. pp. 34-5), namely that one should be able to adapt oneself to the current situation no matter how dramatic or tyrannical it may be, and act one's part neatly and appropriately. In this way, Oceanus' advice continues to help us make sense of patterns of political debate and change, because it shows how Aeschylus exhibits a political discourse similar to that of More. Oceanus and Prometheus discuss the acclimatisation (or, refusal to do so) to the new tyrannical situation, just like More and Hythloday argue over the acceptance of absolute monarchy almost two thousand years later.

Oceanus' advice is emphasised when linking it to other passages that refer to Prometheus' 'over-arrogant tongue' and theft. For example, at 8-9, Kratos states: τοῖα σδέ τοι ἄμαρτίας σφε δεῖ θεοῖς δοῦναι δίκην ("for such an offence he must assuredly pay his penalty to the gods...").<sup>173</sup> ἄμαρτία has a variety of meanings, for while it can mean 'offence or crime' on the one hand, it can also mean 'error of judgment' on the other hand.<sup>174</sup> I think both meanings are applicable here, but the notion of 'error of judgment' is especially appropriate because it links to Prometheus' error in the first play (i.e. his theft and unsuitable speech, which leads to the ascent of man), which sets in motion his descent and Zeus' ascent in the second play, and thus the trilogy's chain of events.

ἄμαρτία shines through the entire tragedy and thus also through its vacillating notions

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<sup>172</sup> *Utopia* 36.

<sup>173</sup> *PV* 8-9.

<sup>174</sup> Griffith 1983: 84 notes that the basic sense of ἄμαρτία here is "missing a target, failing to execute what is intended or required." The same use of ἄμαρτία also appears in Thucydides 1.32, when the Corcyraeans apologise for advocating political isolation, which, in retrospect, was in error of judgment.

of ascent and descent. For instance, at 172-4, Prometheus says that Zeus is wrong to assume that his rhetorical skills will prevent him from descending: *καί μ' οὔτι μελιγλώσσοις πειθοῦς ἐπαιδαῖσιν θέλξει* (“and he will not charm me by the honey-tongued spells of persuasion...”). The use of *ἐπωδή* and *θέλω* clearly brings to mind Gorgias’ *Encomium of Helen*, especially the following two sections. At 10, Gorgias writes: ‘the power of the incantation (*ἐπωδή*) beguiles [the soul] and persuades it and alters it by witchcraft (*γοητεία*).’ This links to his description in 14 of different kinds of *λόγοι*, including the ones that ‘drug and bewitch (*γοητεύω*) the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.’<sup>175</sup> The kind of rhetoric described here “works through ‘magic’ and ‘enchantment’ rather than the objective factuality of *aletheia*,”<sup>176</sup> and it informs Prometheus’ words above. For they make clear that even charming persuasion and Gorgianic rhetoric will not change the fact that Zeus will fall; it is an error of judgment to think so. They also recall the Protagorean notion that there are two sides to everything: while charming rhetoric can be effective and used to do either good or bad, it can also be ineffective and not achieve the desired effects when it is met with a counterargument.

The cyclical nature of the tragedy thus prevails; and it is further reinforced by the connecting rhetoric in lines 151 and 907-10. At 151, Prometheus’ descent is described almost linearly: *τὰ πρὶν δὲ πελώρια νῦν ἀιστοῖ*. (“what was once mighty he now casts into oblivion”). This is a direct link to Zeus’ fall described at 907-10: *Ζεύς καίπερ ἀθάδης φρενῶν, ἔσται ταπεινός, οἷον ἐξαρτύεται γάμον γαμεῖν, ὃς αὐτὸν ἐκ τυραννίδος θρόνων τ’ ἄιστον ἐκβαλεῖ*. (“Zeus, arrogant though his thoughts are, will yet be brought low: such is the union he is preparing to make, which will cast him out of his autocracy and off his throne into oblivion”).

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<sup>175</sup> Gorgias, *Helen* 10, 14.

<sup>176</sup> Segal 1962: 112. For a discussion on (Gorgianic) rhetoric being a ‘magical’ gift that beguiles the audience, see de Romilly 1975, especially 1-22.

In this vein, *καίπερ αὐθάδης φρενῶν* also reflects Prometheus' warning above and the structure that characterizes the trilogy: regardless of what Zeus may think, unless he changes, his autocracy is not going to last but will be altered and one day he too will be cast into oblivion (*ἄιστος*), just like Prometheus.

However, although Zeus' rule is new and tyrannical, and subject to change in *Prometheus Unbound*, where Zeus compromises and matures, which in turn makes a new settlement, in *PV* it is the only regime that is recognised, thus making him the legitimate ruler. Certainly, this stays in tune with the logic of the sequence noted earlier, and the words used to describe his position accentuate this further. Specifically, while Zeus is referred to as *τραχὺς μόναρχος*, he is also described as *ταγὸς μακάρων* and *μακάρων πρύτανις*; and the connotations of *ταγὸς* and *πρύτανις* seem to be less negative than those of *μόναρχος*.<sup>177</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the orderly element of his rule, the fact that Zeus' laws are not set up properly, underlines the idea that they can be subject to change. On the one hand, this reinforces Zeus' autocratic rule and power (and thus the negative aspects of the possibility of change, which also reflects More's contempt for absolute monarchs and their tampering with laws) since he can alter the laws as many times as he wishes. On the other hand, the lack of fixation also bears positive connotations, namely that *anyone* (be it or Zeus or anyone else) can reject and change the laws.<sup>178</sup> In this sense, we are also presented with a version of the

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<sup>177</sup> *PV* 96 and 170. For example, in Aeschylus' *Persians* 21-7, *ταγοὶ* is used to refer to four praiseworthy Persian marshals. Thus, while Zeus may lead without *θέμις*, he does not necessarily lead without *τάξις*. This is also implied by the inclusion of *πρύτανις*, which represents Zeus as someone who is the rightful commander, or chief magistrate, of his polity, as well as by the military language at *PV* 150 (*δὲ δὴ νόμοις Ζεὺς ἀθέτως κρατύνει*) which is used to define his rule.

<sup>178</sup> There is a similar definition of *ἄθετος* meaning 'to be rejected' in a military context at Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 11.15. Furthermore, at Polybius' *Histories* 18.9.10, *ἄθετος* means 'to no avail' or (ultimately) 'fruitless' when it is decided to allow Philip to send an embassy to Rome. Connecting these two definitions of *ἄθετος* to the use of the word in Zeus' regime, it underlines the idea that his rule is ultimately unavailing and it can, and will, be rejected.

sophists' belief, which, contrary to Oceanus' advice stated earlier, advocates the release of their pupils from the expectation to conform to the ordinances of Athens, so they are free to pursue anything they wish without feeling any sense of constraint or moral obligation.

This alludes to Callicles' opinion in the *Gorgias*, when he argues against restrictive moral laws because they give rights to those who do not deserve them, namely the naturally weaker, and it also describes the nature of Zeus' regime. Specifically, on the one hand, there is Zeus, whose position as the naturally stronger puts him in an enviable place because he is not bound by civic laws but able to satisfy his appetite in any way he wishes. On the other hand, Callicles' sophistic opinion also reflects Prometheus' warning, namely that change will come regardless of the conventions of Zeus' rule.<sup>179</sup> This, in turn, recalls the point made earlier in regards to persuasive rhetoric: when someone can propose one regime without feeling restrained by the existing one, then another can do the same. It is clear that the change that occurs in *Prometheus Unbound* is brought about by a prophecy (and a compromise) rather than persuasive rhetoric, as is the case in the Aristophanic comedies discussed in the subsequent chapters, since neither Zeus nor Prometheus are persuaded by the other's words. However, the key components of Callicles' sophistic rhetoric, namely that it is possible to formulate alternative responses to already established ideas, do reflect the nature of the description of Zeus' rule in *PV* as well as the relationship between ruler and ruled.<sup>180</sup>

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Cf. *Birds*, especially 1494-1552. The entire play involves a comic rebellion against the divine establishment and suggests that it is possible to (re-) claim leadership. On the comedy's parallelism with *PV*, see Herington 1963b.

<sup>179</sup> *Gorg.* 483-492. It is, however, also necessary to distinguish Callicles (whose sophistic nature may be a Platonic invention) from real historical sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias, and Antiphon. See Klosko 1984: 128.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Poulakos 1995: 25. Cf. Farrar 1988: 64. "In arguments about knowledge, as in political discussions in the assembly, all claims could be questioned, and no one disputant could trump the others by appealing to some privileged access to things as they really are. The point of exploring opposing claims was to discover the best argument, to be assessed in terms of persuasiveness and plausibility or...reflective acceptability." "...men can believe and show

In this vein, even though the reference to persuasive rhetoric is a contrast to some of the fundamental elements of *PV*, linking it to the cyclical imagery that informs the trilogy, it does show that while Zeus' rule is undeniably dominant it is also not the only rule that is possible. However, if we anchor the possibility of proposing a different regime in man's ascent and the Protagorean reliance on human intellect and rhetoric, rather than the gods, the following question, asked by Herrick, arises: "If truth and reality depend on who can speak the most persuasively, what becomes of justice, virtue, and social order?"<sup>181</sup> The subsequent passages on the *Gorgias*, the *Statesman*, and the *Protagoras* present the significance, and potential consequences, of this question, especially when considering it in light of the theme of change analysed in *PV*.

### III. Plato's Critique of Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*

It is clear that the view that a tyrant's power is desirable because it allows him to do whatever he desires, surfaces in *PV*, and it is this opinion that links to a wider debate about the nature of moral life and to the moral basis of politics itself.<sup>182</sup> At 491e-492c of the *Gorgias*, Callicles joins this debate when he states that the strong man is in an enviable position because he is always able to satisfy his appetite. This opinion connects with his distinction between φύσις and νόμος, and his belief that it is only natural and fair for the stronger to rule over the weaker.<sup>183</sup> At 483a, he notes that it is only by convention that doing

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one another to be mistaken, but nothing that a man believes is in an absolute sense false, and all 'measurements' must be taken into account."

<sup>181</sup> Herrick 1997: 38.

<sup>182</sup> Dodds 1959: 1-2; Klosko 1984: 137.

<sup>183</sup> *Gorg.* 483d. Cf. *Laws* 690b, where the Athenian compares different claims to rule and be ruled. In regards to the fifth claim, he says, οἶμαι τὸ κρείττονα μὲν ἄρχειν, τὸν ἥττω δὲ ἄρχεσθαι. ("...I suspect, that the stronger should rule and the weaker be ruled"). To which

wrong is worse than suffering wrong; by nature, it is the opposite. The reason is this: weak lawmakers make laws for themselves and their own interests; and they wish to prevent those who are naturally stronger from gaining an advantage over them.<sup>184</sup> They draw up νομοί, which determine what is just and unjust, and ignore the fact that they may contradict φύσις.

For example, their laws may state that it is unjust for the strong to have an advantage over the weak, but there are numerous examples based on φύσις (such as the animal world and certain historical events) that state the opposite. This is why the lawmakers are weak according to Callicles: they enforce restrictive moral laws, and they “frame social attitudes condemning such ‘seeking the advantage’ as wrong, shameful, and unjust.”<sup>185</sup>

Callicles’ opinion is undoubtedly provocative and, as Stauffer points out, he gives “a harshly realistic defense of the strong in their universal oppression of the weak.”<sup>186</sup> His point, that true justice requires action against conventional rules in order to strip the weak of the rights they do not deserve, is exemplified further by his words at 492c where he says: “luxury and licentiousness and liberty, if they have the support of force, are virtue and happiness” (τρυφή καὶ ἀκολασία καὶ ἐλευθερία, ἐὰν ἐπικουρίαν ἔχη).<sup>187</sup> The significance of this view is

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Cleinias replies, μάλα γε ἀναγκαῖον ἀρχὴν εἶρηκας. (“A form of rule with a compelling logic to it”).

<sup>184</sup> *Gorg.* 483b-c.

<sup>185</sup> Vickers 1998: 103. The historical Gorgias expresses a similar view in *Helen* 6 when he says that it is not Helen’s fault that she was overcome by the will of the gods, but rather the law of *physis*. “For it is the nature of things, not for the stronger to be hindered by the weaker, but for the weaker to be ruled and drawn by the stronger, and for the stronger to lead and the weaker to follow.”

<sup>186</sup> Stauffer 2002: 634. See also Dodds, who notes that Callicles’ vision of the strong finally overcoming the weak, and throwing off the chains, which conventional justice lays on him, leads him to use “words [at 482a-b] suggestive of a religious revelation.” Dodds 1959: 266-7.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Klosko 1984: 128. See also Stauffer 2002: 640, who argues, “Callicles is not simply a debunker of justice and virtue but...he believes in a kind of justice based on a certain view of virtue: the superior...deserve to rule and to have more.”

Callicles’ argument brings to mind *Clouds* 1036-40 (and Aristophanes’ tendency to create comic material out of sophistic arguments), where the Weak Argument expresses his desire to confound (συνταράσσω) the Strong Argument; it is this desire which earned him his

stressed further at 494b when he talks about the essential attributes of a pleasant life. Callicles' opinion here brings to mind the point made earlier, namely how the debate in the *Gorgias* belongs to a bigger debate about the nature of morality, and the moral basis of politics. Stauffer asserts that "Callicles is not simply amoral, despite his efforts at times to present himself that way," but he is attached "to a certain understanding of morality," which he outlines in the discourse presented above.<sup>188</sup>

Callicles is not alone in his opinion. His opposition to conventional morality actually bears a resemblance to the view which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates in the *Republic* and which he seems therefore to endorse, and it is clear that Callicles "seems in various ways close to Plato's heart."<sup>189</sup> Moreover, as Vickers notes, "Callicles represents an antidemocratic attitude with which Plato fundamentally sympathized."<sup>190</sup> Plato, like Callicles, advocates the rule of those who have supreme human qualities, and even though the qualities he has in mind are different from those of Callicles, his ideal society where the superior, i.e. the philosophers, rule over the weak, recalls that of Callicles in some ways. Of course, Plato would argue that this political set-up is necessary because it ultimately only benefits the weak, whereas Callicles is not concerned about their wellbeing. Additionally, there are many human pleasures of which Callicles is fond (such as appetite, luxury, and licentiousness), which Plato

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name, because he pioneers the idea of arguing against established principles of justice. Cf. Farrar 1988: 63-4.

<sup>188</sup> Stauffer 2002: 640-1. Cf. Rendall 1977: 175, who asserts, "the plurality of interlocutors in the dialogue...reflects the fact that each individual has his own point of view, his own assumptions, and his own moral character, and must be dealt with in respect of these qualities." Klosko, on the other hand, thinks that Callicles "has thought about moral questions and has developed his distinctive brand of immoralism." Klosko 1984: 136. Similarly, referring to Polus' opinion that a tyrant's power is desirable, Vickers notes: "Gorgias was merely inept, but Polus is amoral, putting orators and politicians in the role of being able to do wrong at their pleasure." Vickers 1998: 99.

<sup>189</sup> Klosko 1984: 134.

<sup>190</sup> Vickers 1998: 102. See also Dodds 1959: 13, and Sørensen 2016: 35, who notes that the *Gorgias* is "the most uncompromisingly antidemocratic of Plato's works and the one most explicitly and unswervingly critical of his native Athens."

does not support. However, their general moral judgment about the political necessity, and natural right, to have a superior class rule over an inferior one, is comparable. In this way, they also seem to share at least elements of a view, which relates to the problems they find in the existing structure of society, as both pertain to certain hierarchical issues within it.

A similar comparison can be made between Socrates and Gorgias in the dialogue because they too, despite their different opinions of the value of rhetoric, base their thoughts on the existing political and legal structure of Athens. In their exchange, Socrates expresses clearly his “hostility to the democracy of Athens, to its social structure, legal system, and to the medium which sustained that system – the oratory of the *rhetores* or public speakers in the Council, the Assembly, and the lawcourts.”<sup>191</sup> Similarly, when Dodds answers his own question, ‘Why is the *Gorgias* so bitter?’, he asserts that it “stands out among the early dialogues...by the direct and bitter criticism which it levels against Athenian politics and politicians.”<sup>192</sup> Gorgias meanwhile, praises the oratory of the Athenian rhetors and he draws attention to its meritorious aspects – the same ones that are shameful, according to Socrates.

The following outline of Gorgias’ and Socrates’ opinions on rhetoric is long, but I think it is worth paraphrasing them at this length because it informs the subsequent chapters, especially the discussions of the use and misuse of rhetoric in *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Ecclesiazusae*. Plato’s critique of rhetoric introduces us to the kind of thinking necessary for the following chapters; it helps us understand the consequences of persuasive and deceptive rhetoric as a key tool in Athenian politics; and it shows what these consequences mean, not just for Aristophanes and Plato, but also for us. It also emphasises the implications of the point made in the introduction, namely that we live in a world where rhetoric is under ever increasing scrutiny and that the right to speak does not always come with the willingness and

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<sup>191</sup> Vickers 1998: 85.

<sup>192</sup> Dodds 1959: 19.

ability to contribute effectively to political debate. This in turn links to the question asked at the end of the section on *PV*: if the ascent of man, and the subsequent development of law and politics, depends solely on who is the most eloquent, clever, and opportunistic, then how does this affect our political virtue, justice, and social system?

In the *Gorgias*, Plato presents two opposing opinions on rhetoric. On the one hand, there is Gorgias, who believes that rhetoric deals with the greatest and the best of human affairs (τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀνθρωπέων πραγμάτων καὶ ἄριστα), namely the ability to persuade others. He states:<sup>193</sup>

τὸ πείθειν ἔγωγ' οἷόν τ' εἶναι τοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ δικαστὰς καὶ ἐν βουλευτηρίῳ βουλευτὰς καὶ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐκκλησιαστὰς καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ συλλόγῳ παντί, ὅστις ἂν πολιτικὸς σύλλογος γίγνηται.

I call it the ability to persuade with speeches either judges in the law courts or statesmen in the council-chamber or the commons in the Assembly or an audience at any other meeting that may be held on public affairs.

Moreover, because rhetoric deals with the kind of persuasion that you find in law-courts and public gatherings, it also “deals with what is just and unjust” (περὶ τούτων ἃ ἐστὶ δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικοι).<sup>194</sup> Gorgias asserts that this ability is so powerful that it enables you to have “the doctor as your slave” (δοῦλον μὲν ἔξεις τὸν ἰατρόν) and “the trainer as your slave” (δοῦλον δὲ τὸν παιδοτρίβην); and “your money-maker will turn out to be making money not for himself, but for another, - in fact for you...” (ὁ δὲ χρηματιστὴς οὗτος ἄλλῳ ἀναφανήσεται χρηματιζόμενος καὶ οὐχ αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ σοί).<sup>195</sup>

Gorgias advocates this power of rhetoric because it appeals to the mind of people, and

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<sup>193</sup> *Gorg.* 452e. Cf. Segal 1962: 105. “Plato in [the] *Gorgias*...describes the aim of Gorgianic rhetoric as ‘putting persuasion in the psyche of the audience.’ It is thus apparent that Gorgias regarded his rhetoric as having more than a superficial effect on the ear, as actually reaching and ‘impressing’ the psyche of the hearer.”

<sup>194</sup> *Gorg.* 454b.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. *Phaedrus* 267a-b.

it is, according to him, its main function.<sup>196</sup> It is due to this power of rhetoric that Gorgias believes it “is the greatest good, and a cause not merely of freedom to mankind at large, but also of dominion to single persons in their several cities” (μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν καὶ αἴτιον ἅμα μὲν ἐλευθερίας αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἅμα δὲ τοῦ ἄλλων ἄρχειν ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ πόλει ἐκάστῳ).<sup>197</sup>

Socrates, on the other hand, does not agree with Gorgias. He believes that rhetoric incorporates too many negative elements in order for it to be part of the greatest and the best of human affairs.<sup>198</sup> Firstly, while he does think that rhetoric is a form of persuasion, he also thinks that there are two kinds of persuasion – “one providing belief without knowledge, and the other sure knowledge” (τὸ μὲν πίστιν παρεχόμενον ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναί, τὸ δ’ ἐπιστήμην). Socrates believes that rhetoric falls under the former category, which is why he asserts, “rhetoric is a producer of persuasion for belief, not for instruction in the matter of right and wrong” (πειθοῦς δημιουργὸς ἐστὶν πιστευτικῆς ἀλλ’ οὐ διδασκαλικῆς περὶ τὸ δίκαιόν τε καὶ ἄδικον).<sup>199</sup> Secondly, Socrates states that rhetoric is a branch of flattery (κολακεία), which, in turn, “is a semblance of a branch of politics” (ἔστιν γὰρ ἡ ῥητορικὴ κατὰ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον πολιτικῆς μορίου εἶδωλον).<sup>200</sup> This is problematic because, according to Socrates, flattery is a

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<sup>196</sup> *Gorg.* 452e-453a. Haden 1992: 320, points out that the historical Gorgias employs a similar position in *Helen* 10-14. “According to Gorgias, the power of logos is to manipulate and mold the psyche ‘as it wishes.’ Furthermore, logos is not subject to objective reality, but is itself an independent agent; speech being a human convention which we cannot transcend, together with its relations to psyche it effectively defines reality for us.” Cf. *Phaedrus* 261a.

<sup>197</sup> *Gorg.* 452d. See Irwin’s translation, which makes this point even clearer: rhetoric is “responsible for freedom for a man himself, and at the same time for rule over others in his own city.” See also Rosenmeyer 1955: 231-2, who remarks that Gorgias acknowledges the autonomy of speech. For him, “speech is not a reflection of things, not a mere tool or slave of description, but...it is its own master.”

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Vickers 1998: 88. “Socrates practices dialectic but wholly rejects rhetoric...Dialectic involved individuals, rhetoric approached the masses, and was therefore corrupt.”

<sup>199</sup> *Gorg.* 454e-455a. Cf. *Frogs* 1396, πειθὼ δὲ κοῦφόν ἐστι καὶ νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον. (“Persuasion is a lightweight thing and has no mind of its own”).

<sup>200</sup> *Gorg.* 463b-d. See Dodds 1959: 225, who points out that κολακεία, while usually translated as ‘flattery,’ “applies to a wider range of actions and also carries a more emphatic

disgrace (αἰσχρός) “because it aims at the pleasant and ignores the best” (ὅτι τοῦ ἡδέος στοχάζεται ἄνευ τοῦ βελτίστου).<sup>201</sup>

Thirdly, argues Socrates, because rhetoric is a branch of flattery, it is irrational and therefore cannot be an art. He says, “I refuse to give the name of art to anything that is irrational” (ἐγὼ δὲ τέχνην οὐ καλῶ ὃ ἄν ᾗ ἄλογον πρᾶγμα).<sup>202</sup> Thus, Socrates’ contempt for rhetoric is clear: (i) rhetoric’s only concern is to make people believe rather than instruct them in what is right and wrong; (ii) rhetoric is a branch of flattery and therefore a disgrace; (iii) rhetoric is not rational and therefore also not an art. It is also clear that Socrates seems to justify this outlook by basing it on three binary oppositions: persuasion (πειθῶ) versus instruction (διδασχῆ), belief (πιστεύω) versus actual knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), and speech (λόγος) versus actual content of the speech (πρᾶγμα).<sup>203</sup> Referring to 454e-455a, McComiskey writes, “Gorgias concedes that his *technê* merely creates belief, and does not provide knowledge of

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implication of moral baseness,” the sort of “time-serving opportunism which panders to public taste instead of trying to educate it.”

<sup>201</sup> *Gorg.* 465a. This view is picked up at 481e and 482b, where Socrates scolds Callicles for constantly changing his speeches in the Assembly until the demos agrees with him, and until he says what it desires. Socrates asserts that it is better to have a number of people disagree with you than to face internal disagreement in one’s self.

This brings to mind Achilles’ statement in *Il.* 312-13, ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κεῖνος ὁμῶς Αἴδαο πύλησιν ὅς χ’ ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη. (‘For hateful in my eyes, even at the gates of Hades, is that man that holds one thought in his mind while saying another’). See also Aristotle *Rhet.* I.xi.18, καὶ τὸ κολακεύεσθαι καὶ ὁ κόλαξ ἡδέα: φαινόμενος γὰρ θαυμαστῆς καὶ φαινόμενος φίλος ὁ κόλαξ ἐστίν. (‘Flattery and the flatterer are pleasant, the latter being a sham admirer and friend’).

<sup>202</sup> *Gorg.* 465a.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. McComiskey 1992: 208. Cf. *Tim.* 51d-e, νοῦς καὶ δόξα ἀληθῆς ἐστων δύο γένη...τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν διὰ διδασχῆς, τὸ δ’ ὑπὸ πειθοῦς ἡμῖν ἐγγίγνεται: καὶ τὸ μὲν αἰεὶ μετ’ ἀληθοῦς λόγου, τὸ δὲ ἄλογον: καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀκίνητον πειθοῖ, τὸ δὲ μεταπειστόν: καὶ τοῦ μὲν πάντα ἄνδρα μετέχειν φατέον, νοῦ δὲ θεοῦς, ἀνθρώπων δὲ γένος βραχὺ τι. (‘Reason and true opinion are two distinct kinds.... For the one of them arises in us by teaching, the other by persuasion; and the one is always in company with true reasoning, whereas the other is irrational; and the one is immovable by persuasion, whereas the other is alterable by persuasion; and of the one we must assert that every man partakes, but of Reason only the gods and but a small class of men’).

what is right and wrong.”<sup>204</sup>

However, despite eventually agreeing with Socrates that rhetoric only creates belief and not knowledge, to Gorgias, this is not necessarily a bad thing. For example, at 456b, he says rhetoric can be used to persuade a reluctant patient to take their medicine or undergo surgery.<sup>205</sup> Thus, rhetoric can be a life-saving art because not only does it persuade the patient to take their medicine, but it also enables them to start believing that it will help. “By extension,” Kastely writes, “the public office of rhetoric is to serve the community by persuading it to undertake advantageous actions when through ignorance or fear the community is unwilling to do so.”<sup>206</sup>

In Gorgias’ opinion, this underlines the power of rhetoric once again: “for there is no subject on which the rhetorician could not speak more persuasively than a member of any other profession whatsoever, before a multitude” (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν περὶ οὗτου οὐκ ἂν πιθανώτερον εἶποι ὁ ῥητορικὸς ἢ ἄλλος ὅστισοῦν τῶν δημιουργῶν ἐν πλήθει).<sup>207</sup> At the same time, despite

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<sup>204</sup> McComiskey 1992: 209.

<sup>205</sup> Later, Maximus of Tyre uses the patient-argument the other way around. See Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 86, who writes, “in Plato...rhetoric, one of the false arts, causes an *unhealthy swelling* when it is employed in political life, and Maximus of Tyre compared those who take pleasure in empty rhetoric, failing to recognize its deceptiveness, with fevered patients who gorge themselves on food and drinks against their physician’s advice...” The same comparison appears in Lucian’s *Philopseudes* where Eucrates’ “gouty swelling in [his] feet is evidently the result of dietary overindulgence...but it is a by-product also of his appetite for lies which is described in gastronomic terms at the dialogue’s close when the philosophers ‘feast themselves’ on lies after Tychiades’ departure, and when Tychiades finds himself in need of an emetic after his over-indulgence in the strong wine of the philosophers’ lies.” Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 86.

Ní Mheallaigh 2005: 95 notes that this scenario (“philosophers and other intellectuals...gathered around the sick-bed of the eminent philosopher Eucrates”) “recalls that of the *Phaedo*, where a group of friends congregate about Socrates’ death-bed in his prison-cell, but in a humorous reworking of that poignant scene, Eucrates has merely been laid up with gout as a result of his luxurious lifestyle...”

<sup>206</sup> Kastely 1991: 100.

<sup>207</sup> *Gorg.* 456c. Cf. 458e-459. Cf. *Frogs* 1391 and *Antigone* fr.170, οὐκ ἔστι Πειθοῦς ἱερὸν ἄλλο πλὴν λόγος, καὶ βωμὸς αὐτῆς ἔστ’ ἐν ἀνθρώπου φύσει. “Persuasion has no other temple than speech, and her altar is in human nature.” Trans. Collard and Cropp. Both statements

praising this positive aspect of rhetoric, Gorgias also acknowledges the more negative ones (and thus the ones Socrates has problems with). He makes clear that rhetoric, like any other form of exercise (ὥσπερ τῆ ἄλλῃ πάσῃ ἀγωνίᾳ), needs to be used carefully and fairly, and only in times when it is appropriate.<sup>208</sup> Just because the orator is able to easily win over the multitude in any topic that he may wish to take up, does not mean that they should also do so. This is just like a boxer or a wrestler should not use his skills to strike down both his friend and enemy (καὶ φίλων καὶ ἐχθρῶν) alike.<sup>209</sup>

This suggests that, even though Gorgias advocates rhetoric because it incorporates the element of persuasion, which can be used both positively and negatively, he is also committed to justice.<sup>210</sup> In particular, he seems to believe that rhetoric, in order to live up to the virtue of its power, can be used to determine the best course of action for a community, i.e. the one with the most just outcome. This is why, unlike Socrates who thinks that rhetoric is to justice

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recall one of the issues Socrates has with rhetoric: it does not know the truth about things but is merely a technique of persuasion, which allows any speaker to appear more knowledgeable among the masses than the actual expert in the subject matter.

Cf. *Apol.* 18a-c, where Socrates asserts that it is ‘an orator’s virtue to speak the truth,’ but that his accusers have been telling very persuasive lies.

<sup>208</sup> *Gorg.* 456c-d.

<sup>209</sup> *Gorg.* 456d; 457a-b. Cf. *Helen* 14, where the historical Gorgias recognises the following: “the effect of speech upon the structure of the soul is as the structure of drugs over the nature of bodies; for just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease, and others to life, so also in the case of speeches some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others embolden their hearers, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.” Cf. *PV* 172-4, where Prometheus states that even Zeus’ beguiling rhetoric will not save him from his downfall.

Segal notes that “in establishing the parallel with the *pharmaka* of medicine, [Gorgias] does not conceal the fact that the art of persuasion, like its medical counterpart, can be dangerous as well as beneficial...Thus Gorgias cannot be charged with complete moral naiveté; he is aware of the consequences of his *techné*...” Segal 1962: 116.

For more information on the term φάρμακον, which has both magical and medical connotations, see Lloyd 1979: 44.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. the Protagorean vision of the ascent of man discussed on pp. 57-8: if human inventiveness, especially in regards to political and legal institutions, can do either good or evil, so can rhetoric. Cf. Hall 2010: 181.

what sophistry is to legislation,<sup>211</sup> and unlike Polus who thinks that rhetoric is a means for orators to rule like tyrants,<sup>212</sup> Gorgias believes that rhetoric is “an art existing for the benefit of the community.”<sup>213</sup>

Nonetheless, despite their different opinions on the usefulness of rhetoric, both Socrates’ and Gorgias’ approaches are based on a kind of “*situationality* of philosophical reflection,” which show their attitude to rhetoric as a key tool of contemporary Athenian politics.<sup>214</sup> Consequently, as Vickers writes, the *Gorgias* is not “a universally valid critique of rhetoric” but “the product of a specific time and place [i.e. early fourth-century Athens].” Segal asserts similarly: “[Gorgias] is primarily a rhetorician, but one with broad interests – practical rather than theoretical – and a grounding in some of the ontological and physical conceptions current in his day.”<sup>215</sup> Likewise, while Gorgias (like Callicles), may be overly provocative with some of his assertions, and Socrates overly polemical with his responses

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<sup>211</sup> *Gorg.* 465c. Cf. Vickers 1998: 98. “Regarding the mind and body there are four genuine arts, and four spurious ones...” The genuine arts for the body are ‘gymnastics’ and ‘medicine,’ and the ones for the mind are ‘legislation’ and ‘justice.’ The spurious ones, meanwhile, are ‘cosmetics’ and ‘cooking’ for the body, and ‘sophistic’ and ‘rhetoric’ for the mind. Thus, to emphasise Socrates’ analogy, he thinks rhetoric is a spurious art in comparison to justice, just like sophistry is spurious in comparison to legislation.

<sup>212</sup> *Gorg.* 466b-c. οὐχ, ὥσπερ οἱ τύραννοι, ἀποκτεινύασίν τε ὃν ἂν βούλωνται, καὶ ἀφαιροῦνται χρήματα καὶ ἐκβάλλουσιν ἐκ τῶν πόλεων ὃν ἂν δοκῇ αὐτοῖς; (“Are they not like the despots, in putting to death anyone they please, and depriving anyone of his property and expelling him from their cities as they may think fit?”).

<sup>213</sup> Kastely 1991: 100. Note that both Gorgias and Polus recognise the unlimited agency of rhetoric; however, while Polus admires this agency because it allows an orator to manipulate a community in whatever way they wish, Gorgias values it for the reasons stated above. Moreover, while Polus emphasises the advantages rhetoric can offer to individuals (for example, tyrannical power), Gorgias focuses on the good it can do for groups of people.

<sup>214</sup> Rendall 1977: 174. Cf. Vickers, who argues that much of Plato’s criticism is rather unfair. “He mentions the dockyards (517c; 519a) but not the Parthenon; he condemns the dramatists along with the politicians for flattering the prejudices of the mob (502b), but forgets the *Trojan Women* and the *Knights*; he ignores the economic condition which made the Periclean introduction of payment for service on juries and other bodies (515e) ‘a necessity if democracy was to be more than a façade.’” (Vickers quotes Dodds 1959: 33 here).

<sup>215</sup> Segal 1962: 101. Cf. Segal 1962: 104. The historical Gorgias “reflects the continued interest of the late fifth century in the internal processes of the psyche, and the application of this awareness of the area of psychic phenomena to rhetoric and a *techne* of persuasion.”

(although according to Haden, all Socrates wants is “to stimulate his respondents to become thinking and acting citizens, gaining individuality and independence under the guidance of reason”),<sup>216</sup> both draw attention to the status of rhetoric in late fifth-century and early fourth-century Athens. This is why it is worth stressing the importance of the ‘situationality’ of their philosophical reflections.

Indeed, it is this situationality of philosophical reflections, as well as that of political and legal rhetoric, which informs many important strands of the works discussed here. More importantly, it gives way to an analysis of the different ways in which νόμος is alterable and the role rhetoric plays in these alterations. Firstly, it is clear that Callicles attacks the entire existing Athenian democracy because it enables the weaker Athenians to be strong; it deprives the stronger ones of their natural superiority; and it ignores the laws of nature in favour of conventional interests. Moreover, as Vickers states, “he [is] an antidemocratic advocate of political power as achieved through the spoken word.”<sup>217</sup> Like Gorgias, Callicles sees the personal advantages orators can gain when skilfully using (and misusing) rhetoric in a specific community. Unlike Hythloday and More who warn about the consequences of internal strife and who prefer silence to inappropriate speech, Gorgias and Callicles value the very intemperance in talking for which More has a disdain.

Secondly, it is clear that Plato is closer to More’s heart than to his two contemporaries in this regard. Throughout the *Gorgias*, he attacks rhetoric because he links it to the desires to gain power in Athens and to live an indulgent life.<sup>218</sup> The intensity of his polemic against the use of rhetoric in the Athenian democracy, and especially in the assembly where it is used to

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<sup>216</sup> Haden 1992: 326.

<sup>217</sup> Vickers 1998: 91. Cf. Kennedy 1963: 14-5.

<sup>218</sup> The following fragment from the comic poet Platon expresses the same sentiment: γλώττης ἀγαθῆς οὐκ ἔστ’ ἄμεινον οὐδὲ ἔν. ἐκ τῶν λόγων δ’ ἅττ’ αὐτὸς ἐπιθυμεῖς ἔχεις. (“There is nothing better than a good tongue. The tongue possesses power by its words; from words you get what you desire”). Fr.52, Orion *Anthology* 1.

form opinions, which might not bode well in the end, is noteworthy because it points at the real perpetrator that is being attacked in the dialogue. As Vickers writes: “the real target [of the *Gorgias*] is Athenian politics, but rhetoric is put in the same boat, and sunk without trace.”<sup>219</sup> This sentiment is visible throughout the entire dialogue, and it is also reiterated at the end when Socrates concludes, “and that every kind of flattery, with regard either to oneself or to others, to few or to many, must be avoided; and that rhetoric is to be used for this one purpose always, of pointing to what is just, and so is every other activity.” (καὶ πᾶσαν κολακείαν καὶ τὴν περὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὴν περὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, καὶ περὶ ὀλίγους καὶ περὶ πολλούς, φευκτέον: καὶ τῆ ῥητορικῆ οὕτω χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἀεὶ, καὶ τῆ ἄλλῃ πάσῃ πράξει).<sup>220</sup> In this sense, it is not only κολακεία that must be avoided, but also the κόλακες, and Athenians should shift their attention to the only genuine use of rhetoric, namely the attainment of justice.

However, this is no easy task. As the *Statesman*, written approximately thirty years after the *Gorgias*, makes clear, it is not only about avoiding κολακεία and κόλακες, but also about understanding the rhetoric from different, internal, factions in Athens. The dialogue portrays the problems of epistemological and rhetorical political exercise because it exemplifies, by using several analogies and myths, that Athenians are often unable to evaluate judgments objectively because of their affiliation with one particular faction, and hostility to others. They praise the qualities which belong to their faction and with which they are familiar, but tend to blame the ones from different factions because they feel peculiar and alien to them. This suspicion, as the *Statesman* makes clear, is rooted in rhetoric: different groups are incapable of judging one another’s political statements impartially because they use different words and metaphors. This in turn makes it challenging to determine who is

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<sup>219</sup> Vickers 1998: 113.

<sup>220</sup> *Gorg.* 527c.

merely a κόλαξ and who is an epistemic politician who knows how to focus on what is really best for the polis.

The myth of the reversed cosmos, told from 269c to 274b, is a good starting point for this discussion. It not only offers a mythical explanation for the incessant failure in finding a sincere political expert but it also paints a picture of the political situation in Athens, which continuously seems to be marked by Athenians going round in circles due to their inability to understand one another properly. In this vein, it also enriches the discussion of the *PV* and the argument that the cyclical presentation of the trilogy can help us understand recurrent patterns of political change and rhetoric, as well as their consequences. For both the dialogue and the myth within it feature notions of ascent and descent, which relate to the ones seen in Aeschylus; and like the tragedy, it presents us with a kind of imagery that reflects not only the past and the present but also the future.

#### **IV. The Myth of the Reversed Cosmos in the *Statesman***

The myth of the reversed cosmos is told by the Stranger in order to define more clearly the nature of the king.<sup>221</sup> It states, “at certain periods the universe has its present circular motion, and at other periods it revolves in the reverse direction” (τὸ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς φορὰν τοτὲ μὲν ἐφ’ ἃ νῦν κυκλεῖται φέρεσθαι, τοτὲ δ’ ἐπὶ τὰναντία).<sup>222</sup> More specifically, the Stranger asserts:<sup>223</sup>

τὸ γὰρ πᾶν τόδε τοτὲ μὲν αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ, τοτὲ δὲ ἀνῆκεν, ὅταν αἱ περίοδοι τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μέτρον εἰλήφωσιν ἤδη χρόνου, τὸ

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<sup>221</sup> Rosen 1979: 59 points out that the Stranger actually makes “seven distinguishable statements to explain why he tells the myth.” (268a5-c10, 271e4 ff., 272d5 ff., 273e4, 274b1 ff., 274e1, 275b1).

<sup>222</sup> *Stat.* 270b.

<sup>223</sup> *Stat.* 269c-d.

δὲ πάλιν αὐτόματον εἰς τάναντία περιάγεται, ζῶον ὃν καὶ φρόνησιν εἰληχὸς ἐκ τοῦ συναρμόσαντος αὐτὸ κατ' ἀρχάς.

during a certain period God himself goes with the universe as guide in its revolving course, but at another epoch, when the cycles have at length reached the measure of his allotted time, he lets it go, and of its own accord it turns backward in the opposite direction, since it is a living creature and is endowed with intelligence by him who fashioned it in the beginning.

That is, at one time the universe is guided by a divine cause (τοτὲ μὲν ὑπ' ἄλλης συμποδηγεῖσθαι θείας αἰτίας), and at another time it is left to itself and then moves by its own motion (τοτὲ δ' ὅταν ἀνεθῆ, δι' ἑαυτοῦ αὐτὸν ἰέναι) in the opposite direction.<sup>224</sup> The first period exhibits the following features:<sup>225</sup>

- (i) Every mortal creature stops aging and stands still for a while; then, it starts aging in the opposite direction until it disappears completely.
- (ii) The earth-born race which once existed at another time, returns out of the earth, as do those who are dead: the process of birth is reversed alongside with the reversal of the universe.
- (iii) During that time, there are neither states nor families; because every member of the earth-born race comes out of the earth, neither of them has any recollection of their former lives.
- (iv) All living beings live together peacefully and abundantly; they converse with one another and learn from each other.

This, the Stranger tells Socrates, is the period, which is characterised as “the life of men in the reign of Cronus” (τὸν δὴ βίον μὲν τὸν τῶν ἐπὶ Κρόνου)<sup>226</sup> or, more generally, the age during which the Demiurge rules.<sup>227</sup> The other period is set in motion by the departure of the gods, and portrays an age where the world is left to its own devices.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> *Stat.* 270a.

<sup>225</sup> *Stat.* 270d-272b.

<sup>226</sup> *Stat.* 272b.

<sup>227</sup> For a recent discussion on the role of the Demiurge in ancient thought, see O'Brien 2015.

<sup>228</sup> *Stat.* 273a-e.

- (i) The gods let go of the parts of the world which are under their care, which causes an earthquake and the destruction of all living beings.
- (ii) Eventually, the universe recovers and carefully fashions a rule over itself, incorporating the lessons it has learned from the former period.
- (iii) However, as time goes on, the world forgets the teachings and disorder prevails.
- (iv) Just as the world is about to self-destruct from within, the Demiurge steps in and takes up his place as helmsman again, reversing everything that has become unsound.

Fowler argues that the Stranger here “describes the age of innocence, the fall of man and the barbarism that follows, and the partial restoration of man through divine interposition and the gift of the various arts of civilization.”<sup>229</sup> He further asserts, “Plato does not offer this as a real explanation of the existing condition of the world, but it serves...to present...a theory which may account for some of the facts of life.”<sup>230</sup> Comparably, Rosen states: “the myth of the reversed cosmos is both a product and an interpretation of political existence. It is both of and beyond the polis.”<sup>231</sup>

I agree with Fowler and Rosen, but I also think that there is more that can be said about this. Firstly, like the design of the *Prometheia*, the myth provides us with a presentation of ascent and descent, and an incessant sequence of degeneration: regeneration: degeneration: regeneration etc. Secondly, the absence of the Demiurge in the second period shows the potential consequences of Protagoras’ atheism and his exclusive reliance on the human intellect; and it offers an answer to the question asked earlier, if there is no place for the gods in human development, then what kind of anchor is there for human beings? The myth makes clear that the answer is chaos, and it thus shows the necessity of the gods, as it is they, not reason, who save mankind.

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<sup>229</sup> Fowler 1925: 55 n. 1.

<sup>230</sup> Fowler 1925: 55 n. 1.

<sup>231</sup> Rosen 1979: 85.

I disagree with the traditional interpretation of the myth, which often “generates a hopelessly pessimistic picture of the world now, when things just wind down from bad to worse, and the only hope of salvation is Doomsday.”<sup>232</sup> That view misses the significance of the sequence the myth clearly possesses. This is why, drawing from Rosen’s argument, I suggest that the myth, and the dialogue itself, is a portrayal of epistemological, rhetorical and political exercise, and the problems that frequently arise with it in fifth- and fourth-century Athens. Additionally, I argue that the direction of the argument in the dialogue mirrors the cyclical nature of the universe in the myth, which is metaphorically underlined by the Stranger’s use of the word *πάλιν* on several occasions. (This is similar to the intratextual sequences of ascending and descending cycles seen in *PV*). For instance, at 264b, he asserts, *πάλιν δ’ οὖν ἐξ ἀρχῆς* (“so let us begin again”), and at 268d, he states, *πάλιν τοίνυν ἐξ ἄλλης ἀρχῆς δεῖ καθ’ ἑτέραν ὁδὸν πορευθῆναι τινα* (“then we must begin again from a new starting-point and travel by a different direction”). Likewise at 275c, he says, *τῆδε δὴ πάλιν ἐπανέλθωμεν* (“then let us go back to this point”), and at 279a, he declares, *πάλιν δὴ τὸν ἔμπροσθε λόγον ἀναληπτέον* (“then we must take up our former argument again”).<sup>233</sup>

On the one hand, *πάλιν* clearly relates to the style of the Stranger’s and Young Socrates’ dialogue, which includes the evocation of former arguments made earlier in the discussion. On the other hand, it also has the potential to highlight, like the *Prometheia* and the myth of the reversed cosmos, the recurrent nature of political arguments. Merrill argues, “the dialogue is organized as a ring cycle, and that seeing the dialogue as a ring illuminates its teaching in several respects.”<sup>234</sup> I take this argument further and suggest that not only does the

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<sup>232</sup> McCabe 1997: 102. Rowe 1995.

<sup>233</sup> See also 276e and 287b, and Rosen 1979: 60n2. Cf. *Philebus* 66d and *Tim.* 48a-b.

<sup>234</sup> Merrill 2003: 36. Cf. Rosen 1979: 60. “The pervasive motif in the *Statesman* of a return to the origin is clearly related to the myth of the reversed cosmos.”

cyclical nature of the *Statesman* (and the *Prometheia*) relate to the overall teachings of the dialogue and the myth of the reversed cosmos, but it also links to the political situations seen in fifth- and fourth-century Athens. This I will demonstrate especially in the discussions of *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*.

“The need to start anew,” Rosen writes, “or to repeat correctly some previously botched step,” is certainly appropriate to a discussion of political exercise.<sup>235</sup> This is exemplified further when looking at the metaphor of weaving, which the Stranger refers to frequently in the dialogue as an analogy with political exercise, and the general portrayal of politics in the myth, which are, contrary to Callicles’ opinion in the *Gorgias*, depicted as a necessary defence against nature.<sup>236</sup> More specifically, I suggest that the metaphor of weaving and the use of the word *πάλι* stand in relation to the role politics play in the myth, as they point to the continuous crafting of political and legal systems by statesmen, which often recall those which have been crafted at some point before. At the same time, despite their repetitiveness, they also point at the need for law and politics and the difficulty to teach properly the virtue that should come along with it.

The purpose with which the Stranger tells the myth, i.e. in order to define clearly the nature of the king, underlines this further. Particularly, at 292c, the Stranger asserts that the

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I cannot agree with West 1987: 195, who argues against the idea that the recurrent images in Aeschylus are connected and have a particular structural function. He writes, “Aeschylus is not Wagner, placing his Leitmotive to make deliberative links between distant passages, still less organizing them into a ‘highly intricate system’... .He has certain favourite images and fields of imagery to which he has recourse again and again because he likes them...because they continue to be appropriate, not because he wishes to recall some earlier passages or prepare for some later one.” I agree that it is not possible to determine how consciously Aeschylus included the connections of different passages and how much he actually thought about their structural function, but I think a good case can be made that such connections exist, especially when we link the set-up of the *Prometheia* to the structure of the *Statesman*. Cf. Mossman 1996: 58.

<sup>235</sup> Rosen 1979: 60. See also Klein 1977.

<sup>236</sup> See, for instance, 308d-e.

definition of the king neither depends on the size of the government (οὐκ ὀλίγους οὐδὲ πολλούς) nor on wealth or poverty (οὐδὲ πενίαν οὐδὲ πλοῦτον) but on knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). More importantly, political expertise, and the ability to rule intelligently, is based on the knowledge of finding the right moment of action, which entails knowing what to do and knowing when to do it (καιρός).<sup>237</sup> This is why, “the rule of the epistemic statesman is the best of all...”<sup>238</sup> This is also why, as Popper and Lane point out, the question about the *Statesman* is not necessarily, “‘How can we so organise political institutions that bad or incompetent rulers can be prevented from doing too much damage?’ [indeed, that is the question about *Utopia*], but rather ‘Who should rule?’”<sup>239</sup> The dialogue makes clear that the person with knowledge should rule; and Lane suggests that it “goes on to ask: ‘what does rule consist in, and how is knowledge related to rule?’”<sup>240</sup> I agree with Lane, but I also think that it is possible to build onto these questions and ask more specifically, how is the skilful employment of a particular kind of knowledge related to rule, and how does this relate to the arrangement of a specific rule?

These questions are noteworthy, as they point at a significant theme of this thesis, which is particularly highlighted in the analyses of *Birds* and *Ecclesiastusae*, namely the use of distinct rhetorical strategies by knowing exactly when to take advantage of a specific community and how to assert one’s power over it. In this way, both the art of weaving and the use of ἐπιστήμη portray not only the activity of statecraft as a useful competence but they also show that the application of it does not always bode well for the entire community, but sometimes only for the statesmen themselves. I agree that the *Statesman* invites us to consider

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<sup>237</sup> Lane 1998: 3.

<sup>238</sup> Miller 1980: 117. Cf. Sørensen 2016: 167.

<sup>239</sup> Lane 1998: 6. Popper 1995 (1945): 120.

<sup>240</sup> Lane 1998: 6.

“the concomitant need to define and establish the rule of the true political expert,”<sup>241</sup> and, as the recurrent ending of the second period in the myth indicates, the rule of a political expert who does not forget the teachings from the previous period but who is able to apply them appropriately. However, I am also inclined to assert that this ‘true political expert’ may simply be a statesman who knows how to employ their expertise at the right moment for personal benefits rather than considering the actual needs of a community.

The Stranger’s statement at 301d underscores this:

δυσχερανάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν ἓνα ἐκεῖνον μόναρχον, καὶ ἀπιστησάντων μηδένα τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρχῆς ἄξιον ἂν γενέσθαι ποτέ, ὥστε ἐθέλειν καὶ δυνατὸν εἶναι μετ’ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἐπιστήμης ἄρχοντα τὰ δίκαια καὶ ὅσια διανέμειν ὀρθῶς πᾶσιν, λωβᾶσθαι δὲ καὶ ἀποκτείνουσι καὶ κακοῦν ὃν ἂν βουληθῆ ἑκάστοτε ἡμῶν

because men are not content with that one perfect ruler, and do not believe that there could ever be any one worthy of such power or willing and able by ruling with virtue and knowledge to dispense justice and equity rightly to all, but that he will harm and kill and injure any one of us whom he chooses on any occasion.

On the one hand, ἂν βουληθῆ ἑκάστοτε implies that the true statesman may indeed act on his own caprices, which may change at any given moment; but on the other hand, it also hints at the employment of specific expertise at the right moment, which has the potential to result in the exploitation of virtually the entire community.<sup>242</sup> This recalls a problem mentioned earlier: the community over which the statesman wishes to establish their rule is not necessarily able to understand different kinds of political experts when they come from different factions. At

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<sup>241</sup> Lane 1998: 11.

<sup>242</sup> See also *Stat.* 298a-b, where the Stranger compares the rule of a capricious statesman to that of a corrupt doctor and a ship’s captain at sea. This tyrannical picture of the ‘ship of state’ connects with that of Zeus at *PV* 189-193, especially with the use of ἀτέραμνος in that passage. Linking this to Zeus’ role as οἰακονόμος, it shows that the figure of the captain is not necessarily positive. Brock writes, “the recognition of the chorus in the *Prometheus* that ‘new rudder-guiders (οἰακονόμοι) control Olympus makes it plain that the fundamental significance of the motif is of autocratic control.” Brock 2013: 55. At the same time, the passage in *PV* also shows that this control is not eternal. The inclusion of ραίω (or, ραίόμενος) and στορέσας indicates that Zeus will suffer shipwreck if he does not change— this emphasises the cyclical nature of both the *PV* and the *Statesman*.

307c, the Stranger asserts, “and almost always we find that the restraint of one class of qualities and the courage of the opposite class, like two parties arrayed in hostility to each other, do not mix with each other in the actions that are concerned with such qualities.” (καὶ σχεδὸν ὡς τὸ πολὺ ταῦτά τε καὶ τὴν σώφρονα φύσιν καὶ τὴν ἀνδρείαν τὴν τῶν ἐναντίων, οἷον πολεμίαν διαλαχούσας στάσιν ἰδέας, οὐτ’ ἀλλήλαις μειγνυμένας ἐφευρίσκομεν ἐν ταῖς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράξεσιν).

The reason for this is this: “men who are akin to each class...praise some qualities as their own and find fault with those of their opposites as alien to themselves, and thus great enmity arises between them on many grounds.” (κατὰ γὰρ τὴν αὐτῶν ἐκατέροις συγγένειαν τὰ μὲν ἐπαινοῦντες ὡς οἰκεῖα σφέτερα, τὰ δὲ τῶν διαφόρων ψέγοντες ὡς ἀλλότρια, πολλὴν εἰς ἔχθραν ἀλλήλοις καὶ πολλῶν πέρι καθίστανται).<sup>243</sup> This brings to mind Plato’s disdain for rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, and his contempt for the media (such as the assembly and the law-courts), which help sustain it. Athenians praise words which sound good and with which they are familiar (or could see themselves becoming familiar with), but they struggle to understand the words that arise from a different faction, even though the political proposals incorporated in them may actually be beneficial to them.

Specifically, the Stranger’s statement shows that different factions are unable to approach (new) judgments objectively because of their admiration of one particular set of qualities and hostility to another. They praise their own qualities because they know them well; but they tend to blame the ones from other factions because they feel strange to them. This suspicion of the unfamiliar, and the fondness for the well-known, is rooted in rhetoric: different factions are unable to judge one another objectively because the language they use is different. Thus, not only are they from different groups but also from different rhetorical

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<sup>243</sup> *Stat.* 307d.

backgrounds, which prevents them from evaluating one another's words and planned actions, and therefore also which political action might really be the best.<sup>244</sup>

This exemplifies why κόλακες often find certain Athenians easy game: if they use language that derives from the specific Athenians' faction they wish to address, they are able to persuade them easily and quickly because they share the same language, which allows them to construct a narrative of belonging. For example, as I show in the chapter on *Birds*, Peisetaerus does this when he talks to the birds: he mentions (alleged) aspects of their past when they were kings (465-482) and he promises them that once they have established their city, they can demand the rulership back from Zeus (554). Likewise, Tereus charms them by saying if they give Peisetaerus a chance, they will be able to expand their proto-pastoral setting, thus appealing to the importance of the birds' environment (421-5).

Praxagora employs a similar style when she convinces her audience to elect her general, as I demonstrate in the chapter on *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*. By combining male and female rhetorical strategies, and by reformulating metaphors from the household and placing them into the political realm of the men, she is able to situate herself within the communities of both men and women.<sup>245</sup> This in turn enables her to generate a feeling of belonging in both communities, as she is able to focus on the shared interests in both groups. This also shows that Praxagora is exceptionally clever because she manages to address multiple factions and overcomes the difficulty that often comes with it, as described by the

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. Lane 1995: 281, who suggests: "the conflicts between these factions are presented as conflicts between two ideologies, each believing itself the exclusive path of politic virtue, and each tending for different reasons to lead to war – all traits of the conflicting factions in the *Statesman*."

<sup>245</sup> See, for instance, lines 109; 174-5; 183-5; 205-9; 217-8; 221-8. Cf. *Rhet.* 1390a17-21, ἐπει ἀποδέχονται πάντες τοὺς τῶι σφετέρῳ ἦθει λεγομένους λόγους καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους, οὐκ ἄδηλον πῶς χρώμενοι τοῖς λόγοις τοιοῦτοι φανοῦνται καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ οἱ λόγοι. ("since all men are willing to listen to speeches which harmonize with their own character and to speakers who resemble them, it is easy to see what language we must employ so that both ourselves and our speeches may appear to be of such and such character").

Stranger. However, there are also moments when it seems impossible to persuade Athenians from different factions (regardless of whether it is flatterers or genuine politicians who attempt to do so) because they are so unfamiliar with the language that is being used to address them that they cannot comprehend what is being said. This is, for example, the case in *Lysistrata* when the Proboulos is unable to overcome his hostility towards Lysistrata because he understands neither her rhetoric nor her political proposal (501-3, 527-8).

These examples make clear that both Aristophanes and Plato reflect issues which occur frequently in the assembly and the law-courts of late fifth-century and early fourth-century Athens. Miller states: "...Greek politics in the fourth century continues to be the same wearying and disastrous mix of internal faction and external war which Thucydides described in the fifth."<sup>246</sup> More importantly, this continues to show that while the art of statecraft, like the art of weaving, often aims to combine opposites and settle disputes among factions – and indeed, this is Lysistrata's aim in her argument with the Proboulos – this is not always the case. It certainly works in *Ecclesiazusae*, and it also works towards the end of *Lysistrata* because the comedy finishes on a peaceful note where men and women have reconciled and resolved their differences. However, as stated above, and as I demonstrate later on in this thesis, in the scene with the Proboulos, it only heightens the conflict.<sup>247</sup>

This emphasises the rationale for *Utopia* (and also shows once again how More is not only influenced by the political situation of his time, but also by that of the past): if conflicting internal factions are prohibited, they can do no damage. Additionally, it illustrates that, inasmuch as the purpose of the *Statesman* is "to accomplish something through

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<sup>246</sup> Miller 1980: 114.

<sup>247</sup> That being said, in *Ecclesiazusae*, it is technically different as well. Praxagora's statecraft may have eliminated conflict in theory, but it is clear that in reality her style of leadership, and use of *καίρως*, will only benefit herself and not the Athenians. Cf. *Eccl.* 229-232; 239-4; 246; 725-7.

discourse, and inasmuch as discourse accomplishes its results by weaving together appropriate elements of speech, the ability...to achieve [this] goal depends on success in this weaving process.”<sup>248</sup> The Stranger in the *Statesman* inadvertently reflects Lysistrata’s exchange with the Proboulos when he says, “Now this opposition of these two classes is mere child’s-play; but when it affects the most important matters it becomes a most detestable disease in the state.” (παιδιὰ τοίνυν αὕτη γέ τις ἡ διαφορὰ τούτων ἐστὶ τῶν εἰδῶν: περὶ δὲ τὰ μέγιστα νόσος συμβαίνει πασῶν ἐχθίστη γίγνεσθαι ταῖς πόλεσιν).<sup>249</sup> This state of childishness (παιδιὰ) can affect the whole course of life (περὶ ὅλην τὴν τοῦ ζῆν παρασκευήν), according to the Stranger, because it prevents the Athenians from engaging in proper matters of discourse to such a degree that it might lead them directly from freedom into slavery (ἔλαθον αὐτοὺς γενόμενοι δοῦλοι).<sup>250</sup> Or, as the myth of the reversed cosmos and the repeated use of *πάλιν* exemplify, it leads to the reversal of times; and the Athenians find themselves back where they started.

The Stranger asserts that this fate can only be avoided when the true statesman steps in and fixes the lack of understanding between the different factions with his epistemological and legislative art. It is this art, which has the potential to fill the gap between the different factions, which in turn allows them to overcome their natural differences. Specifically, this statesman fashions divine bonds in the eternal parts of the souls of the citizens (μὲν κατὰ τὸ συγγενὲς τὸ ἀειγενὲς ὄν τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῶν μέρος θεῖω συναρμοσαμένη δεσμῶ); after that, “it

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<sup>248</sup> Sayre 2006: 94. Sayre notes that the goal of the *Sophist* is similar to that of the *Statesman* because it is concerned with “the weaving together of Forms with one another” (τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκὴν). Relevant points are made at 262 when the Stranger asserts that speech achieves its goal by “weaving together verbs and names” (συμπλέκων τὰ ῥήματα τοῖς ὀνόμασι). “The remarks,” Sayre writes, “illustrate an underlying theme of the *Sophist* to the effect that speech, on whatever level of generality, depends on the weaving together of appropriate constituents.”

<sup>249</sup> *Stat.* 307d.

<sup>250</sup> *Stat.* 307e-308a. Cf. *Laws* 864d, where *παιδιὰ* is used in a similar way.

binds the [mortal] part of them with human bonds” (μετὰ δὲ τὸ θεῖον τὸ ζῳογενὲς αὐτῶν αὐθις ἀνθρωπίνους).<sup>251</sup> This is done by weaving the citizens together via institutional arrangements of (inter-) marriages and the sharing of children.<sup>252</sup>

However, like the societal structure of Plato’s Kallipolis and More’s Utopia, so the existence of the statesman who is able to weave the citizens together in this manner is an unattainable ideal. As the Stranger points out at 301d-e: “But, as the case now stands...no king is produced in our states who is, like the ruler of the bees in their hives, by birth pre-eminently fitted from the beginning in body and mind...” (νῦν δὲ γε...οὐκ ἔστι γιγνόμενος...ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι βασιλεὺς οἷος ἐν σμήνεσιν ἐμφύεται, τό τε σῶμα εὐθὺς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν διαφέρων εἶς).<sup>253</sup>

One reason for this is the complicated and partial use of *καιρός*. Both the rule of the kingly art in the *Statesman*, and that of the guardians in the *Republic*, require deciding “upon the right or wrong time for the initiation of the most important measures in the state” (γιγνώσκουσιν τὴν ἀρχὴν τε καὶ ὀρμὴν τῶν μεγίστων ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐγκαίριας τε πέρι καὶ ἀκαίριας).<sup>254</sup> The *Republic* makes this clear at 546c-d, when Socrates states, if the rulers of Kallipolis choose the wrong moment (*παρὰ καιρόν*) to get married, their “children will be neither good natured nor fortunate” (οὐκ εὐφουεῖς οὐδ’ εὐτυχεῖς παῖδες ἔσονται). This in turn

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<sup>251</sup> *Stat.* 308c.

<sup>252</sup> *Stat.* 310b. This employment of the weaving metaphor brings to mind that of Lysistrata when she demonstrates how she intends to weave all of Greece into one single fabric. See *Lys.* 568-570 and 574-586.

<sup>253</sup> It is worth noting that the task of the political expert in the *Statesman* is different from that of the philosopher-king in the *Republic*. The aim of Kallipolis is to prevent political conflict (between different factions) from arising in the first place; this is why the tripartite structure of the city is organised the way it is: to prevent any form of mixing. The political task of the *Republic* is therefore the opposite of that of the *Statesman*: eliminate the possibility of a clash, and misunderstandings brought on by different rhetorical styles, between opposing groups by separating them. The political task in the *Statesman*, however, is to weave together, rather than split up, these opposing arguments into the fabric of the state itself. Cf. Lane 1995: 278-9; 281.

<sup>254</sup> *Stat.* 305d.

will lead to civil war, which will then fundamentally alter the constitution of Kallipolis. Thus, the choice of the wrong moment leads to the degeneration of the city.

This is similar in the *Statesman*: as stated above, the inability of the Athenians to find *καιρός*, and to act on it appropriately, leads to problematic situations in Athens and to the reversal of the cosmos in the myth. Likewise, the ability of the *κόλακες* to find, and use, *καιρός* also leads to complicated conditions in the polis, albeit only for the others and not for them. Their decision to act on *καιρός* is based on relevant knowledge and rhetoric, which allows them to initiate the measures they deem best in the state – this is also Peisetaerus’ mission in *Birds*, and Praxagora’s in *Ecclesiazusae*. This *καιρός* may be the statesman’s personal one, as opposed to one that benefits the entire polis, but it nonetheless portrays the benefits that can arise from choosing *καιρός* wisely. For the more altruistic statesmen, the decision is based on choosing the right moment, which will allow them to persuade the Athenians to pick policies, which will truly be of advantage to them. However, as discussed above, this undertaking is more difficult because it requires the persuasion of different factions who do not necessarily share the same language. Lastly, for the Athenians themselves, the decision is based on choosing the right moment to listen carefully to the altruistic statesman, rather than to the *κόλαξ*, if they want to escape the recurrent cycles of political conflicts.

In this manner, we are indeed back (*πάλιν*) at the beginning and required to take up the former argument again (*πάλιν δὴ τὸν ἔμπροσθε λόγον ἀναληπτέον*).<sup>255</sup> Like the *Gorgias*, the *Statesman* shows that *καιρός* is related to epistemology and rhetoric; in order for statecraft to be successful (whether it is successful for the entire polis or merely for the *κόλαξ*), it must be able to harness rhetoric in the assembly and the lawcourts, and in the state itself. The

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<sup>255</sup> *Stat.* 279a.

enactment of politics is supposed to be a defence against nature in the myth of the reversed cosmos, but as shown above, it is not just about politics but also about epistemology and rhetoric. In this way, as much as the task of the ideal statesman is to weave the citizens together, they must also be concerned with weaving together different forms of knowledge and rhetoric if they want to break the continual cycles of political conflicts. I am certain More is influenced by this task in one way or another, when he offers a serio-comic version of the weaving process on Utopia and presents one group of citizens only that is innately weaved together.<sup>256</sup>

Meanwhile, the citizens in the *Statesman* must learn to remember the teachings from the first period; however, as is the case in *Gorgias* where the Athenians' task (to use rhetoric only for the attainment of justice and nothing else) is easier said than done, this is no easy undertaking. The Protagorean dependence on the human intellect that comes with the ascent of man complicates this further. As seen in the myth of the reversed cosmos, ultimately the Demiurge offers the necessary solution human beings seek, not reason. The failure of reason (or, the insufficiency of it) is examined in more detail in the *Protagoras*, written approximately thirty years before the *Statesman*. The dialogue discusses a question that automatically arises with the ascent of man, namely whether it is actually possible to teach political virtue and excellence, or whether that undertaking is bound to fail from the beginning.<sup>257</sup> It thus continues to enhance the significance of the question asked at the end of the section on Aeschylus: if political virtue cannot be taught, but is only about who is the most persuasive speaker in the assembly, then what does that mean for the Athenians' political, legal, and social system?

In the *Protagoras*, Socrates argues that wisdom, which is both the highest form and

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<sup>256</sup> Cf. pp. 30-1.

<sup>257</sup> The same question is also asked in the *Meno*, written a couple of decades later.

the unity of all virtues, is something that cannot be taught. Protagoras, on the other hand, disagrees. He believes neither that wisdom unites the other virtues nor that it is impossible to learn how to be virtuous. The analysis of both their arguments is significant because, like the oscillatory layout of the *Prometheia*, the critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, and the examination of *καιρός*, *πάλιν*, and language in the *Statesman*, it continues to ask whether the Athenians are able to break free from their recurrent political cycles by applying political wisdom, or whether this task is impossible to begin with.

## V. The Instruction of Political Virtue in the *Protagoras*

At 319a, Socrates summarises Protagoras' previously announced goal and asserts: "...you appear to be speaking of the civic science, and undertaking to make men good citizens" (δοκεῖς μοι λέγειν τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην καὶ ὑπισχνεῖσθαι ποιεῖν ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας). Protagoras replies, "That, Socrates, is exactly the purport of what I profess." (αὐτὸ μὲν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστιν ὃ Σώκρατες, τὸ ἐπάγγελμα ὃ ἐπαγγέλλομαι). Socrates, as stated at the end of the last section, does not believe that men can be taught how to be good citizens; Protagoras, on the other hand, thinks otherwise and asserts that this virtue is teachable.<sup>258</sup> Moreover, he believes that everybody is able to advise on virtue: "Take my word for it, then, that they have good reason for admitting everybody as adviser on this virtue, owing to their belief that everyone has some of it..." (ὅτι μὲν οὖν πάντ' ἄνδρα εἰκότως ἀποδέχονται περὶ ταύτης τῆς ἀρετῆς σύμβουλον διὰ τὸ ἡγεῖσθαι παντὶ μετεῖναι αὐτῆς, ταῦτα λέγω).<sup>259</sup>

Protagoras' goal is, as Nussbaum asserts likewise, "to make human beings good

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<sup>258</sup> *Prot.* 323c.

<sup>259</sup> *Prot.* 323c.

citizens, teaching them good deliberation both about their household and about the affairs of the city.”<sup>260</sup> She further argues that moral education in Protagoras’ speech “is characterized as answering to a need that is part of our nature. Zeus gave us a natural tendency towards justice; but it must be developed by communal training.”<sup>261</sup> This approach brings to mind that of More analysed in the introduction: citizens’ excellence is developed early on by installing rhythm and harmony in them when they are children because “for the whole of man’s life requires the graces of rhythm and harmony” (πᾶς γὰρ ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εὐρυθμίας τε καὶ εὐαρμοστίας δεῖται).<sup>262</sup> Comparably with Lycurgus and More, the training (and correction) of children is important here:<sup>263</sup>

ἐπειδὴν θᾶπτον συνιῆ τις τὰ λεγόμενα, καὶ τροφὸς καὶ μήτηρ καὶ παιδαγωγὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ πατήρ περὶ τούτου διαμάχονται, ὅπως ὡς βέλτιστος ἔσται ὁ παῖς, παρ’ ἕκαστον καὶ ἔργον καὶ λόγον διδάσκοντες καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενοι ὅτι τὸ μὲν δίκαιον, τὸ δὲ ἄδικον, καὶ τότε μὲν καλόν, τότε δὲ αἰσχρόν, καὶ τότε μὲν ὅσιον, τότε δὲ ἀνόσιον, καὶ τὰ μὲν ποίει, τὰ δὲ μὴ ποίει.

as soon as one of them grasps what is said to him, the nurse, the mother, the tutor, and the father himself strive hard that the child may excel, and as each act and word occurs they teach and impress upon him that this is just, and that unjust, one thing noble, another base, one holy, another unholy, and that he is to do this, and not do that.

Moral training, in Protagoras’ view, is supposed to ensure the development of good citizens who are able to focus clearly, without distraction, on the civic excellences and gifts of Zeus (justice, moderation, and piety).<sup>264</sup> As is the case in More’s *Utopia*, and his interpretation of Lycurgus’ Sparta, the implication here is that moral training guarantees not only excellent

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<sup>260</sup> Nussbaum 1986: 103.

<sup>261</sup> Nussbaum 1986: 103.

<sup>262</sup> *Prot.* 326b.

<sup>263</sup> *Prot.* 325c-d. Cf. *Utopia*, 104.

<sup>264</sup> Meanwhile, traits such as injustice and impiety are opposed to civic virtue. See *Prot.* 323e-324a. Cf. Bartlett 2003: 616. “...according to Protagoras’ account of it, ‘political virtue (323a6-7, b2, 324a1) is limited to moderation, justice, and piety, or to what might be called ordinary decency...’”

citizens but also a healthy government that eradicates problems, which tend to arise from the negligence of the civic excellences. This metaphor highlights this further: in case the child disobeys, he or she must be straightened just like a piece of wood that is bent and twisted (ὥσπερ ξύλον διαστρεφόμενον καὶ καμπτόμενον εὐθύνουσιν ἀπειλαῖς καὶ πληγαῖς).<sup>265</sup> Moral education thus includes the ‘straightening’ of children; and moral excellence, the desired end result, incorporates this straightness, which in turn links to a healthy (and straight) government.

It also includes the teaching of the laws of a city; and it instructs the children in how to live accordingly to them. “And when they are released from their schooling the city next compels them to learn the laws and to live according to them as after a pattern, that their conduct may not be swayed by their own light fancies” (ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἐκ διδασκάλων ἀπαλλαγῶσιν, ἡ πόλις αὖ τούς τε νόμους ἀναγκάζει μανθάνειν καὶ κατὰ τούτους ζῆν κατὰ παράδειγμα, ἵνα μὴ αὐτοὶ ἐφ’ αὐτῶν εἰκῆ πράττωσιν).<sup>266</sup> This constraint to be governed by existing laws that condemns the possibility to be led astray on a whim and without a real plan brings to mind the law-making of Solon, who is said to have made his laws binding and unalterable for a hundred years.<sup>267</sup> In case anyone fails to abide by this constraint, they will have to face correction, which again links to the straightening component of the moral training Protagoras proposes.

It seems then that Protagoras bases at least parts of his claim (that civic virtue is teachable) on the training of youth.<sup>268</sup> This basis of his argument links directly to Socrates’

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<sup>265</sup> *Prot.* 325d. On that note, Bartlett asserts: “...the so-called education necessary to instill [moderation, justice, and piety] consists of exhortations, forced memorizations, threats, and even beatings: ‘Do these things!’ ‘Don’t do those!’” Bartlett 2003: 616.

<sup>266</sup> *Prot.* 326c-d.

<sup>267</sup> Aristotle, *Const. Ath.* 7.2.

<sup>268</sup> At the same time, it also seems to be based on instruction and learning in general. For example, there are certain elements in Protagoras’ argument, which bring to mind Lysistrata’s

concern: he thinks that in both private and public life, “the best and wisest citizens are unable to transmit this excellence of theirs to others” (οἱ σοφώτατοι καὶ ἄριστοι τῶν πολιτῶν ταύτην τὴν ἀρετὴν ἣν ἔχουσιν οὐχ οἴοι τε ἄλλοις παραδιδόναι).<sup>269</sup> (He refers to Pericles as an example, who has been unable to teach Cleinias).<sup>270</sup> Additionally, when the Athenians wish to hear about a particular craft (for example, ship-building or shoe-making) they only listen to the opinion of the trained expert and dismiss that of the one who merely claims to be an expert. (For example, they would not listen to a ship-builder who attempts to give advice on how to make shoes because they know that it is outside his field of expertise).

However, when it comes to matters of the state, anyone, regardless of their background and occupation, can give advice; and “his attempt to give advice is justified by no instruction obtained in any quarter, no guidance of any master; and obviously it is because they hold that here the thing cannot be taught.” (ὅτι οὐδαμῶθεν μαθῶν, οὐδὲ ὄντος διδασκάλου οὐδενὸς αὐτῷ, ἔπειτα συμβουλεύειν ἐπιχειρεῖ: δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι οὐχ ἡγοῦνται διδασκτὸν εἶναι).<sup>271</sup> Protagoras offers a response to this by referring to the roles of Zeus and Hermes in his version of the Prometheus myth. His interpretation of the myth links to *PV* and the ascent of man discussed earlier, as he “gives a ‘progressivist’ version of human evolution typical of Greek thought in the fifth century B.C.”<sup>272</sup> By portraying Zeus as the facilitator of civilization and by offering a symbolic account of the different stages of human evolution,

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and Praxagora’s appropriation of male speech: both learned the (male) civic art and deliberation by listening to men in the assembly and by studying their tricks and expertise. Despite some of the questionable aspects of the female characters’ plans, this does support Protagoras’ point that at least aspects of political virtue (and politics) can be taught. In Praxagora’s case, this also shows again that she is very clever because she combines a natural ability (automatically given to her by the etymology of her name) with training (listening to other orators), and demonstrates that political success does not only depend on opportune moments but also on a distinct capability. Cf. *Prot.* 327b-c and Yona 2015: 377.

<sup>269</sup> *Prot.* 319e.

<sup>270</sup> *Prot.* 320a.

<sup>271</sup> *Prot.* 319c-d.

<sup>272</sup> Yona 2015: 361.

Protagoras merges the themes of ascent and descent that inform both *PV* and the *Statesman*.

Particularly, Zeus' role in the myth sheds light on the importance of the Demiurge in the *Statesman*, on the absence of divine intervention prompted by Prometheus' theft in the *Prometheia*, and thus also on the sophists' reliance on reason. It does so by presenting an ascending sequence similar to the one seen in the *Prometheia*, using the names of the gods. Epimetheus: Prometheus: Zeus. It is clear that Epimetheus represents the primordial period during which humans had to rely on instinct rather than the arts of civilization. Prometheus, meanwhile, represents the development of technical wisdom (speech, reason, arithmetic etc.). The zenith of the sequence, however, is reached with Zeus, because in Protagoras' version of the myth it is he who equips man with political wisdom and thus with the capability to establish governments.<sup>273</sup> The emphasis is thus again on divine interference (as is the case in the myth of the reversed cosmos) rather than just reason (as seen in the historical Protagoras' trust in the human intellect).

Specifically, Protagoras asserts that Zeus asked Hermes to distribute right (δίκη) and respect (αἰδώς) among men, “to the end that there should be regulation of cities and friendly ties to draw them together” (ἵν' εἶεν πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί).<sup>274</sup> When Hermes asks him to whom exactly he should give right and respect, Zeus responds: “To all...let all have their share; for cities cannot be formed if only a few have a share of these as of other arts.” (ἐπὶ πάντας...καὶ πάντες μετεχόντων: οὐ γὰρ ἂν γένοιτο πόλεις, εἰ ὀλίγοι

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<sup>273</sup> *Prot.* 321c-d. Cf. Yona 2015: 366.

<sup>274</sup> *Prot.* 322c. This friendly characterization of Zeus, which focuses on union and benevolence, stands in contrast to the one in *PV*, which is marked by alienation and tyranny. However, it does have the potential to hint at the theme of reconciliation in *Prometheus Unbound* where Prometheus and Zeus have established friendly ties. It also recalls the following passage from *Ag.* 165-6, πλὴν Διός, εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος χρηὴ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμως. (“Only in the thought of Zeus can the heart be free from its vain burden of distress”). Trans. Dodds.

αὐτῶν μετέχοιεν ὡσπερ ἄλλων τεχνῶν).<sup>275</sup> In this version of the story, the gifts of Prometheus only include the wisdom of daily life (περὶ τὸν βίον σοφίαν), not civic wisdom, for that is in the possession of Zeus (ἦν γὰρ παρὰ τῷ Δίῳ).<sup>276</sup> The skill to form civilizations thus comes from Zeus (via Hermes), and not from the development of the human intellect.<sup>277</sup> This is why Zeus' role here is similar to the one of the Demiurge in the *Statesman*: both demonstrate the limits of human wisdom, and the importance of divine, and thus superior, skills.

According to Protagoras, it is because of this divine distribution of civic virtue that Athenians listen to everyone when it comes to matters concerning the state: everybody has some of it and therefore everybody can participate in such discussions. This is in contrast to discussions about matters such as craftsmanship and other trades, which are based on specific expertise and training. Moreover, not only is everyone capable of participating in political discussions, but everyone should participate, because the state cannot exist otherwise.<sup>278</sup> Socrates points out that not everyone may be able to apply civic art wisely (for example, there may be 'bad' sons who are unable to learn from their good, deliberative, fathers) to which Protagoras offers a rather unsatisfactory response. First of all, says he, even the most unjust person among all human laws and societies appears just, in comparison with someone who not only lacks any form of laws and law courts, but also the urge to pursue this civic virtue constantly.<sup>279</sup> That is, it is better to be unjust than to lack justice altogether. Secondly, every teacher does their best to teach civic virtue as well as possible,<sup>280</sup> and thirdly, it is not always

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<sup>275</sup> *Prot.* 322d.

<sup>276</sup> *Prot.* 321c-321d.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Theophil. Antioch. *Ad Autolyicum* 2.8. καὶ Σιμωνίδης· οὔτις ἄνευ θεῶν ἀρετὰν λάβεν, οὐ πόλις, οὐ βροτός. θεὸς ὁ πάμμητις· ἀπήμαντον δ' οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς. ("And Simonides said, no one ever attained excellence without the gods, no city, no mortal. The all-clever one is God: for mortals nothing is free from misery").

<sup>278</sup> *Prot.* 322e. See also Farrar 1988: 84 and Sørensen 2016: 167.

<sup>279</sup> *Prot.* 327c-d.

<sup>280</sup> *Prot.* 327e.

fair to judge sons because often they are still young and have a lot left to learn (ἔτι γὰρ ἐν αὐτοῖς εἰσιν ἐλπίδες: νέοι γάρ).<sup>281</sup>

Protagoras' point that it is better to be unjust than to not have any form of justice at all, and the implication that "political society will endure perfectly well if only a few understand the truth about justice,"<sup>282</sup> is problematic. It underestimates both the fatal consequences of injustice in societies and the role insufficient deliberation can play in the destruction of certain societies. It also points at one of the underlying problems of his argument in general: just because everyone is theoretically able to learn political virtue does not mean that everyone is also able to use it wisely and for the community. For instance, as I demonstrate in the chapter on *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, Praxagora does learn civic virtue (and very well at that), but she does not use it for wise and just things, which would benefit the entire polis.<sup>283</sup> (In *Lysistrata*, on the other hand, Lysistrata does use it to help the Athenian community).<sup>284</sup> The instruction of civic virtue may therefore be possible but it cannot

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<sup>281</sup> *Prot.* 328d. The use of νέος here brings to mind again the role of Zeus in *PV* and the development he supposedly undergoes from the second play of the trilogy to the third. He is a new and young tyrant and, as Hephaestus points out at 35, 'everyone is harsh whose power is new' (ἅπας δὲ τραχὺς ὅστις ἂν νέον κρατῆ), implying that these are the early stages of the regime and that Zeus still has a lot to learn. However, the presumed sequence of the *Prometheia* suggests that Zeus will eventually learn, just like the young sons Protagoras refers to will learn how to apply civic virtue as they continue to grow.

<sup>282</sup> Bartlett 2003: 616.

<sup>283</sup> This becomes clear when looking at Praxagoras's definition of conflict resolution. A 249-60, after being asked how she intends to resolve conflicts in the assembly, she essentially replies, 'I will resolve them by using violence.'

<sup>284</sup> This brings to mind two of the main questions Jason Brennan poses in *Against Democracy*. Drawing from John Stuart Mill and Joseph Schumpeter, he asks: "How much do we really want people to participate in politics? How much should people even be *allowed* to participate?" He asserts, "Mill hoped that getting people involved in politics would make them smarter, more concerned about the common good, better educated, and nobler. He hoped getting a factory worker to think about politics would be like getting a fish to discover there's a world outside the ocean. Mill hoped political involvement would harden our minds yet soften our hearts. He hoped that political engagement would cause us to look beyond our immediate interests and instead to adopt a long-term, broad perspective." Brennan 2016: 2. However, as is the case in Protagoras' argument (and in many assembly scenes in

guarantee that it will also produce wise and good citizens.<sup>285</sup>

One aspect of Protagoras' original question is what teachable skill there is that enables human beings to be good at political deliberation and in control of political decisions, which affect the *polis*. Nussbaum asserts, rightly, that his answer shows us "that a capability for social excellence and for its proper development are a deep part of our human nature and way of life."<sup>286</sup> However, as argued above, this answer also exposes a problem: for many citizens this capability only exists in theory, as they may not have the desire to receive instructions or to study them well. This in turn may lead to problematic moments in the assembly when citizens are neither willing nor fully able to participate in political debates, let alone attend assembly in the first place.<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, as seen in both *Ecclesiazusae* and the *Statesman*, just because someone is happy to learn civic virtue from others, does not mean they are also happy to use it for the good of the community. (Or, as the myth of the reversed cosmos shows, just because someone is able to learn it, does not mean they will also remember it). On the contrary, using the knowledge of this civic virtue in combination with clever rhetoric, they may end up using it to pursue personal goals. In that sense, Socrates is right when he says that it is not possible to teach everyone (as is the case with Cleinias).

It is for these reasons, and especially because of the misuse of civic virtue in combination with deceptive rhetoric, that Socrates proposes the application of a science of

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Aristophanic comedy), often the opposite is true, as people are led astray by ideas of power, injustice, and selfishness. (This is also one of the reasons why Brennan argues for *less* political participation, rather than more, in his book).

<sup>285</sup> On that note, see also Irwin 1995: 79, who argues that Protagoras and Socrates seem to overlook an important issue. "For it is not clear how far the skills and abilities that promote an individual's success are connected with the virtues of justice and shame that are attributed to all the citizens alike. If my own success requires ruthlessness and deception rather than justice, will Protagoras teach me to be ruthless or to be just?"

<sup>286</sup> Nussbaum 1986: 103.

<sup>287</sup> This was an actual problem in late fifth and early fourth-century Athens. An attempt was made to solve it by paying men to attend assembly.

measurement (ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη) in order to evaluate the different sides, which emerge in deliberations, more carefully.<sup>288</sup> Socrates primarily refers to the power of appearance but his argument can also be applied to points made previously about the power of speech. Specifically, when posing the question what skill has the ability to save our lives, he asks:<sup>289</sup>

ἄρα ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη ἢ ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις; ἢ αὕτη μὲν ἡμᾶς ἐπλάνα καὶ ἐποίει ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω πολλάκις μεταλαμβάνειν ταῦτα καὶ μεταμέλειν καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς αἰρέσεσιν τῶν μεγάλων τε καὶ μικρῶν, ἢ δὲ μετρητικὴ ἄκυρον μὲν ἂν ἐποίησε τοῦτο τὸ φάντασμα, δηλώσασα δὲ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἡσυχίαν ἂν ἐποίησεν ἔχειν τὴν ψυχὴν μένουσαν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀληθεῖ καὶ ἔσωσεν ἂν τὸν βίον;

Would it be the art of measurement, or the power of appearance? It is not the latter that leads us astray, as we saw, and many a time causes us to take things topsy-turvy and to have to change our minds both in our conduct and in our choice of great or small? Whereas the art of measurement would have made this appearance ineffective, and by showing us the truth would have brought our soul into the repose of abiding by the truth, and so would have saved our life.

This science of measurement is supposed to minimise any uncertainty Athenians might have about what actually is a good political speech and appearance, and maximise the skill to select

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<sup>288</sup> See Nussbaum 1986: 108, who writes: “the idea that deliberation is, or could become, a kind of measuring is not itself alien to ordinary conceptions. It is as common for a Greek as for us to speak of weighing one course against another, measuring the possibilities.” For example, in *Il.* 22.248-54, Zeus takes out his golden scales and in them places two fates of death, one for Achilles and one for Hector, which is ultimately Hector’s doom, as his side goes down. Likewise, in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, when Dionysus needs to decide whether to take Aeschylus or Euripides with him, he suggests putting the respective playwrights’ verses on a scale in order to determine their value. The same idea of weighing also appears in *Euth.* 7c-d, written around the same time as the *Protagoras*, where Socrates demonstrates the art of measurement as a model for political deliberation to Euthyphro. Similarly, in *Rep.* 602c-d, measurement is used to underline the danger of misperception and the need to avoid it; and at *Phil.* 41e-42, the science of measurement is used for the comparison of pleasures and pains. Meanwhile, at *Phil.* 55d-56c, Socrates refers to it when evaluating which parts of the manual arts are more allied to knowledge and which ones less; a similar use is also found in *Statesman* 284e-285b.

<sup>289</sup> *Prot.* 356d-e.

the best political proposal, one that actually has the potential to bode well for all of them.<sup>290</sup> It is also supposed to maximise knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) because the science of measurement Socrates proposes is also *knowledge* of measurement. Specifically, he asks Protagoras, “...what would save our life? Would it not be knowledge; a knowledge of measurement, since the art here is concerned with excess and defect, and of numeration, as it has to do with odd and even?” (τί ἂν ἔσφραζεν ἡμῖν τὸν βίον; ἄρ’ ἂν οὐκ ἐπιστήμη; καὶ ἄρ’ ἂν οὐ μετρητικὴ τις, ἐπειδὴ περ ὑπερβολῆς τε καὶ ἐνδείας ἐστὶν ἡ τέχνη; ἐπειδὴ δὲ περιττοῦ τε καὶ ἀρτίου, ἄρα ἄλλη τις ἢ ἀριθμητικὴ;).<sup>291</sup>

It is clear that Socrates believes that there is nothing stronger than knowledge (ἐπιστήμης μηδὲν εἶναι κρεῖττον),<sup>292</sup> but this response does contradict, anachronistically, some of the points made in the *Statesman* approximately thirty years later. For the *Statesman* shows that it is not always possible to apply knowledge and measurements properly – as seen in the myth of the reversed cosmos, eventually the Demiurge has to step in in order to rectify the problems caused by the limits of the human intellect. Furthermore, as demonstrated previously, when it comes to evaluating, and measuring, speeches from different factions, the specific knowledge needed for such an undertaking is not necessarily available to someone who is from a faction that is alien to the one whose speeches they are supposed to measure. Therefore, it is questionable whether there actually is as great a benefit in having this knowledge of measurement as Socrates says there is and whether it is possible to measure all political deliberation by the same standard. It may be beneficial to someone who wishes to evaluate speech and sight within their own faction, but it might not be much use to them when

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<sup>290</sup> Cf. Richardson 1990: 26. “In the *Protagoras*, as in the *Republic*, Socrates presents the importance of measurement for *technê* in terms of the need to avoid being fooled by illusions of perceptions and their analogues.”

<sup>291</sup> *Prot.* 357a.

<sup>292</sup> *Prot.* 357c.

it comes to evaluating the same in a different group.

Socrates' proposal then exposes similar problems to the art of Protagoras: it is not necessarily possible to use the science of measurement in every situation, because situations are not always commensurable, which in turn makes it difficult to assimilate political deliberation to the science of measurement. It also makes it difficult to assimilate the pursuit of pleasure to it, because it may not be feasible to determine the best, most pleasurable, outcome when it is not possible to understand all the benefits of every outcome. (This is the case with *Lysistrata* and the *Proboulos*, who does not understand the connotations and values of her metaphors).<sup>293</sup> On that note, Richardson argues: "the underlying supposition is that the hedonism put forward in the *Protagoras* allows one to define a maximum because all goods are commensurable. But...hedonism does not imply commensurability, nor does commensurability imply hedonism."<sup>294</sup>

It seems then, what we need is "a unit of measure, some external end about which we can all agree, and which can render all alternatives commensurable."<sup>295</sup> Richardson's interpretation of Plato's conception of the science of measurement (he says he sees it as a measurement that is preliminary to choice) has the potential to function as such a unit. He writes: "It is measurement in this preliminary sense, as the unitary estimation of ascertainment of quantities providing the data for choice rather than the binary or comparative choice itself, that is the real fruit...of Socrates's science of measurement."<sup>296</sup> In this way, Socrates' point that the precision of knowledge and measurement will 'save our lives' brings to mind many assembly scenes (both off and on stage) where Athenians struggle to estimate the prospective benefits (or lack thereof) that are being offered to them in a political speech. If they had this

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<sup>293</sup> Cf. *Lys.* 501-3; 527-8.

<sup>294</sup> Richardson 1990: 7.

<sup>295</sup> Nussbaum 1986: 110.

<sup>296</sup> Richardson 1990: 25.

Socratic precision in knowledge and measurement, the basis on which they elect leaders and vote for decrees would presumably change and the illusions of perception would slowly wane.

Socrates' proposed precision has thus also to do with estimating prospective levels of advantages and disadvantages in political proposals, which then, quite literally, underlines the 'life-saving' aspect of it. As he says at 356e, this precision includes "knowing when to make a right choice of the greater and when of the less" (ὅποτε τὸ πλεόν ὀρθῶς ἔδει ἐλέσθαι καὶ ὅποτε τὸ ἔλαττον). This in turn highlights the knowledge of measurement further, as it shows that the art is concerned with "excess and defect, and of numeration, as it has to do with odd and even" (ὑπερβολῆς τε καὶ ἐνδείας ἐστὶν ἡ τέχνη; ἐπειδὴ δὲ περιττοῦ τε καὶ ἀρτίου, ἄρα ἄλλη τις ἢ ἀριθμητικῆ).<sup>297</sup> It also includes making the right choice of "pleasure and pain" (ἡδονῆς τε καὶ λύπης).<sup>298</sup> Especially the usage of ὑπερβολῆς τε καὶ ἐνδείας and περιττοῦ τε καὶ ἀρτίου emphasise the relevance of this measurement to the listening of political speeches in the assembly; meanwhile ἡδονῆς τε καὶ λύπης has the potential to hint at the consequences of the choices the Athenians may make.

For instance, if the Athenians were able to apply this knowledge of measurement properly, they would be able to detect excessive superiority, extravagance and unnecessarily strong statements (i.e. ὑπερβολή) in speeches given in the assembly. In the same way, they would be able to uncover the deficiencies of the speeches, and question closely the things that they lack (ἐνδεια). Likewise, while περιττοῦ τε καὶ ἀρτίου primarily refer to the numeration component of measurement here, they do link to the metaphorical use of ὑπερβολή and ἐνδεια. Specifically, it is true that περιττοῦ means 'odd' in the mathematical sense, and it also means 'remarkable' and 'extraordinary' when used to refer to people; however, it also means 'superfluous,' and 'excessive.' All of these are meanings which may be present in a speech,

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<sup>297</sup> *Prot.* 357a.

<sup>298</sup> *Prot.* 357a.

and the Athenians need to unravel and measure them carefully before choosing a leader. The meaning of ἀρτίου underlines this nicely: while it is used to refer to ‘even’ numbers, it is also used to express when something is ‘suitable’ or ‘most perfect.’ Thus, being able to measure περιττοῦ and ἀρτίου would allow the Athenians to vote for the decree (and candidate) that really is most suitable for them and dismiss the one that only appears suitable, but is in reality superfluous.<sup>299</sup>

This vote determines the levels of ἡδονή and λύπη the Athenians will experience afterwards. It is likely that if they apply the knowledge of measurement correctly, there will be more ἡδονή (and indeed, that side will be heavier than the other one) whereas if they do not apply it properly, the scale will tip towards λύπη, the consequences of which are unlikely to bode well for many of the Athenians.<sup>300</sup> In this manner, as the terminology used makes clear, the science of measurement in the dialogue plays the ideal role of assuring a precise calculation of consequences in situations where sight and sound alone are unreliable and misleading.<sup>301</sup> However, like the societal construction of Kallipolis, the weaving-skills of the true statesman in the *Statesman*, and More’s *Utopia*, this ideal calculation remains just that: an ideal, which, at the end of the day, is unattainable, largely due to the different communication styles used in different factions, the lack of a universal commensurability, and

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<sup>299</sup> Aristotle expresses a similar sentiment in *Rhet.* 1375b7 when he compares the judge to “an assayer of silver, whose duty is to distinguish spurious from genuine justice” (καὶ ὅτι ὡσπερ ἀργυρογνώμων ὁ κριτής ἐστίν, ὅπως διακρίνη τὸ κίβδηλον δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀληθές).

<sup>300</sup> The need to measure pleasure and pain is also based on the following. “Since short-term pleasures and pains seem greater than they really are, we make mistaken judgments about pleasure and pain, and so we choose the result that will actually be less pleasant because we believe it will be more pleasant (356c-e)... If we are to avoid [that] error...we need the measuring craft that calculates the prospective quantities of pleasure and pain.” Irwin 1995: 85.

This also emphasises the notion of ἀμαρτία analysed in *PV* (cf. pp. 67-8), and its relation to the chain of events that are set in motion by Prometheus’ error in the first play. If Prometheus had calculated the consequences of his actions more carefully (and stayed true to the etymology of his name), the story might have developed differently.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. Richardson 1990: 32.

the limits of the human intellect. The same is true for Socrates' effort to establish a unity of virtue with wisdom being the unifying element in the *Protagoras*. Since the virtues come together in knowledge, there is no guarantee that they will generate a single practical principle that works for all factions, and that they will stop conflicting incommensurably with one another. In this vein, it is clear that neither in the *Protagoras* nor in the *Statesman* is it truly possible to weave together the virtues and to provide a unified method of precise calculation.<sup>302</sup>

I am inclined to agree with Protagoras and say that the theory of political virtue can be taught; however, when it comes to the practical application of it in pivotal situations pertaining to the Athenians' future, I am not convinced it is teachable due to the points raised in the discussion above. This is why, as Frede states likewise, “the *Protagoras* should...be read as an *aporetic* dialogue”<sup>303</sup> because it leaves us with an impracticable solution to the problems discussed. It seems that Protagoras is aware of that at least to a certain extent because he quotes the following from the poetry of Simonides: “for a man, indeed, to become good truly is hard, in hands and feet and mind foursquare, fashioned without reproach.” (ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι χαλεπὸν, χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ τετράγωνον, ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον).<sup>304</sup> Socrates provides the next line a few sections later: “God alone can have this privilege.” (θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ' ἔχει γέρας).<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Cf. Richardson 1990: 31. “The appeal of a single maximizing principle that implies the commensurability of all goods is that this model would indeed provide the account that unifies virtue with a precise numerical way of unifying it.” However, neither in the *Protagoras* nor in the *Statesman* is this ultimately given.

<sup>303</sup> Frede 1986: 736.

<sup>304</sup> *Prot.* 339b. Cf. pp. 35-6, with n. 115 on the Morean notion, ‘it is impossible to make everything good unless all men are good and that I don’t expect to see for quite a few years yet.’

<sup>305</sup> *Prot.* 341e. Cf. Semon. 42 West Stob. *Ecl.* 2.1.10, Σιμωνίδου· ῥεῖα θεοὶ κλέπτουσιν ἀνθρώπων νόον. “From Simonides: the gods easily steal the wits of men.” On the note that

This quotation highlights the aporetic aspect of the *Protagoras*, but it is necessary to treat it with caution.<sup>306</sup> As ideal and useful as Socrates' proposed science of measurement may be, in reality the Athenians are not able to use it as wisely and as well as they should. They may be able to use it on certain occasions and in certain situations but ultimately they lack the ideal level of goodness in order to use it all the time.<sup>307</sup> More importantly, they lack a permanent kind of goodness in order to apply it properly all the time. As Socrates, now supposedly quoting from both Simonides and Pittacus of Mytilene, says: "to become... a good

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perfection belongs to the gods, see also fr. 590 from Sophocles' *Tereus*, Plato's *Tim.* 29c-d, and Pindar's *Isth.* 5.14 and *Pyth.* 3.81.

<sup>306</sup> Many of Simonides' quotations survive only in the dialogue. It is not clear, "whether Socrates and Protagoras are quoting, paraphrasing, misremembering, or deliberately falsifying the original text", or whether Plato just puts words in their mouth (Carson 1992: 112). Moreover, most scholars cannot even agree on a basic level on what it is that Simonides is actually saying. Some say that the poem quoted in the *Protagoras* exhibits the contrast between being good and becoming good (Woodbury 1953: 141); others claim that there is no such distinction at all (Wilamowitz 1913: 165). Some suggest that the poem compares two different ideas of the good man, namely an aristocratic ideal and an ethical concept of goodness (Frede 1986: 741-2); others state that there is nothing ethical at all about the poem (Adkins 1960: 166-7; 355-9). Some argue that the poem teaches moral innovation (Donlan 1969: 71) while others say it is not innovative but conventional (Parry 1965: 301). Some interpret the poem's topic "as foil to praise a virtue or virtues which are attainable by man" (Dickie 1978: 21); others assert that the poem is supposed to console Scopas (Woodbury 1953: 138; Parry 1965: 298); and others again argue that the poem is a critique of Pittacus (Carson 1992: 111). It is also unclear why Plato includes the poem in the first place. Taylor 1926: 251 asserts that it is a humorous interlude on his part that is meant to provide a relaxing relief from the discussion because 'the most difficult part of it is yet to come'; some believe that it is supposed to show the inferiority of poetry and rhetoric to philosophy (Goldberg 1983: 160); and others think that the inclusion of the poem is crucial to Socrates' entire rhetorical strategy (McCoy 1999: 349).

It is also worth drawing attention to Xenophon's *Mem.* 1.2.56, which offers yet another possible interpretation, namely that Socrates only brings up the poem for malicious intentions – this is something his accuser alleged he did on a regular basis. However, generally, it can be agreed upon that the poem in the *Protagoras* focuses on the impossibility of human perfection and the limits of human reason, and that is the important point here.

<sup>307</sup> Likewise, sometimes they may not have a choice but be bad: ἄνδρα δ' οὐκ ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι, ὃν ἄν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλη. ("For that man cannot help but be bad whom irresistible mischance has overthrown"). *Prot.* 344c. This view is picked up at 345d in another quoted passage: πάντα δ' ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω ἐκὼν ὅστις ἔρδη μηδὲν αἰσχρόν: ἀνάγκη δ' οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται. ("I praise and love everyone willingly committing no baseness; for against necessity not even the gods make war").

man is truly hard (not but what it is possible for a certain state of what one has become, and to *be* a good man is, as you say, Pittacus, impossible, and not within man's reachable means...” (ὅτι γενέσθαι μὲν ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν χαλεπὸν ἀλαθέως, οἷόν τε μέντοι ἐπὶ γε χρόνον τινά: γενόμενον δὲ διαμένειν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ἔξει καὶ εἶναι ἄνδρα ἀγαθόν, ὡς σὺ λέγεις, ὦ Πιττακέ, ἀδύνατον καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον).<sup>308</sup>

This emphasises the point made earlier: in theory, the teaching of political virtue may be possible, and human beings may even be able to retain it for a period (as seen in the myth of the reversed cosmos); eventually, however, this knowledge wanes due to the ephemerality of the teachings and human beings' limited means.<sup>309</sup> This is a direct conflict with Plato “who believes that philosophy can raise us above ordinary morality and its failings and lead us to what Simonides declares impossible: knowledge that makes us immune to all the pressures of misfortune and emotion.”<sup>310</sup> However, if this knowledge is only ephemeral, as both the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras* seem to imply, then it is questionable whether it is possible to be immune to the pressures of misfortune and emotion on all occasions and to escape the continual political cycles to which the Athenians (and others) seem to be subject. Protagoras' goal, to make the Athenians good at deliberation about affairs regarding the household and the city, thus faces great difficulty, as there are seemingly uncontrollable factors that interfere with it on several levels.

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<sup>308</sup> *Prot.* 344b-c. Trans. Lamb, adapted.

<sup>309</sup> According to the historical Gorgias, this is why “most men take opinion as counsellor to their soul.” They are not omniscient and thus “it is not easy for them to recall the past nor to consider the present nor to divine the future...” *Helen* 11. Cf. Farrar 1988: 108.

<sup>310</sup> Beresford 2008: 255.

## VI. The Myth of Atlantis

At the end of the section on the *Protagoras*, it is worth looking at the myth of Atlantis as told in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, because it not only outlines some of the consequences of the problems examined above but it also paves the way for the final section of this chapter. The Platonic myth is a tale of stability and change – it depicts an Athens that undergoes recurrent cycles of ascent and descent, and it shows an Atlantis that is destroyed and subsequently barred from ever rising again.<sup>311</sup> The relevance to the themes of the *Prometheia* and the *Statesman* is evident, as is the connection to the Greek idea of the circular movement of the cosmos: “everything returns to what it was before, and what has been will be again.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> White 1958: 449. On the authenticity of the myth, see Cameron 1983: 81, who argues that Plato made the whole story up. Gill 1979: 64 states similarly that Plato’s Atlantis story is one of the earliest works of narrative fiction in Greek literature. See Ní Mheallaigh 2008: 405, who writes, “the complex framing devices prefacing some of Plato’s dialogues [such as *Timaeus* and *Critias*] establish a genealogy for the reported dialogues [e.g. the reference to Solon and his encounter with the Egyptian priest and the elder Critias’ conversation with Solon], which serves both to assert and simultaneously to undermine the dialogues’ authenticity, to naturalize and at the same time advertise their potential fictionality in a way that foregrounds, and invites the reader to reflect upon, issues of authority.” Cf. Ní Mheallaigh 2008: 412.

The questionable authenticity of the story humorously brings to mind the following passage from the *Phaedrus* 274c: “I can tell something I have heard of the ancients; but whether it is true, only they know.” (ἀκοήν γ’ ἔχω λέγειν τῶν προτέρων, τὸ δ’ ἀληθὲς αὐτοὶ ἴσασιν). However, as Socrates says at 275b (and the same is true for the Atlantis myth), it is not the source of the story that is important, but the truth of the message that it seeks to deliver. Cf. *Rep.* 382d.

<sup>312</sup> Guthrie 1957: 63. The relevance is further emphasised by the idea that the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* are part of a projected tetralogy, which was intended to include a *Hermocrates* as the final dialogue (*Crit.*108a). The proposed order was this: *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Hermocrates*. (See Bury 1929: 3-4). Clay 1997: 53-4 speculates that Hermocrates might have brought the tetralogy to a close by scolding contemporary and imperial Athens for their enslavement of others. This would provide a direct link to *Rep.* 351b, where Socrates talks about Athens’ enslavement of the rest of the Greek world, which in turn would leave us with a ring composition comparable with that of the *Prometheia*. (Similarly, *Tim.*17c recaptures statements made in regards to the *Republic* the previous day, thus recalling events from the first text). See also Gill 1979: 72-4.

Moreover, the allusions to the *Republic* as the first part of the projected tetralogy, leave us with an ‘ascent-turned-descent’ sequence that brings to mind that of the *Prometheia*. At *Tim.* 26c-d, Critias describes Kallipolis and its citizens as a fable, which must now, in the

At *Timaeus* 22c-d, Critias tells a story which he heard from his grandfather when he was young who had heard it from Solon who in turn got it from an Egyptian priest (22a). It is a tale about recurrent destructions of mankind, some of which are caused by fire due to a change in the rotation of the heavenly bodies that orbit the earth (22e), others by water (22e-23a) when the gods purge the earth with floods, and others by different means (22c). The flood is the more significant catastrophe in this context, asserts the priest (via Critias), because it wipes out the city-dwellers and leaves behind “none of you but the unlettered and uncultured, so that you become young as ever, with no knowledge of all that happened in old times in this land or in your own.” (καὶ τοὺς ἀγραμμάτους τε καὶ ἀμούσους ἔλιπεν ὑμῶν, ὥστε πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἶον νέοι γίγνεσθε, οὐδὲν εἰδότες οὔτε τῶν τῆδε οὔτε τῶν παρ’ ὑμῖν, ὅσα ἦν ἐν τοῖς παλαιοῖς χρόνοις).<sup>313</sup> The emphasis on youth and new beginnings that contain neither knowledge nor any of the other arts of civilization alludes to the (recurrent) origin of political government.<sup>314</sup> Comparably with the myth of the reversed cosmos, Plato offers an

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second part of the tetralogy, be transported into the realm of facts in order to make it more tangible. The realm of facts is ancient Athens, whose citizens are the citizens of Kallipolis and the descendants of the contemporary Athenians. In order to transform the tale from fiction to fact, it is necessary to discuss the creation of the cosmos and mankind in order to understand how the perfect ancestors came into existence (*Tim.*26d). It is difficult to work with the *Critias* and the *Hermocrates* due to the abrupt ending of the former and the nonexistence of the latter. However, it is still possible to suggest the following ring-like sequence of the four parts: first part (fable): second part (creation of the world and its inhabitants): third part (ideal citizens of ancient Athens in action): fourth part (moral).

The circular architectural design of Atlantis (*Crit.* 115c-116c) and the allusions to circular features in the creation process in the *Timaeus* (e.g. 34a-b; 36 c-e; 37b; 38b) informs this ring composition – and the ascending notion at *Tim.* 30a (disorder becomes order) adds to the series proposed above.

<sup>313</sup> *Tim.* 23a-b.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. *Laws* 676a. Cf. *Met.* 1074b10 (‘every art and philosophy have been discovered and forgotten again’). Cf. *Pol.* 1269a. Aristotle speaks of the ‘first men’ here who, “whether sprung from the earth [as is the case in the *Statesman*] or the survivors of some destructive cataclysm, were just like ordinary foolish people.” (πρώτους, εἴτε γηγενεῖς ἦσαν εἴτ’ ἐκ φθορᾶς τινος ἐσώθησαν, ὁμοίους εἶναι καὶ τοὺς τυχόντας καὶ τοὺς ἀνοήτους).

account of the evolution of civilization from its primordial stages, and he places it in a series of recurrent cataclysms and foundations.<sup>315</sup>

Furthermore, as is the case in the myth of the reversed cosmos, the periodic destructions contain elements of forgetfulness: the people only remember one deluge even though many have occurred (23d) and, more importantly, they lack memories of ancient Athens, a state that “was the bravest in war and supremely well organised also in all other respects. It is said that it possessed the most splendid works of art and the noblest polity of any nation under heaven of which we have heard tell.” (ἀρίστη πρὸς τε τὸν πόλεμον καὶ κατὰ πάντα εὐνομωτάτη διαφερόντως. ἢ κάλλιστα ἔργα καὶ πολιτεῖαι γενέσθαι λέγονται κάλλιστα πασῶν ὀπόσων ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἡμεῖς ἀκοὴν παρεδεξάμεθα).<sup>316</sup>

The story of ancient Athens, and its relationship with Atlantis, emphasises the themes of stability and change. During the time it exists, Atlantis exists also, and although Atlantis is powerful already, it seeks to expand its empire, which is why it decides to advance against Athens (24e). A war ensues and, even though Athens wins the war, both empires are destroyed: Athens falls victim to an earthquake and Atlantis sinks into the ocean – thus, both regimes swap a long period of stability for a cataclysm (25c-d).<sup>317</sup> In the case of Atlantis, the

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<sup>315</sup> Cf. *Meteor.* 1.3 (‘for the same opinions appear in cycles among men not once or twice, but infinitely often’). See also Polybius 6.5.4, “what then are the beginnings...and what is the first origin of political societies? When owing to floods, famines, failure of crops...there occurs such a destruction of the human race as tradition tells us has more than once happened, and as we must believe will often happen again, all arts and crafts perishing at the same time, then in the course of time...men have again increased in numbers...”

<sup>316</sup> *Tim.* 23c-d. Cf. *Crit.* 109d-e; 112e. This ancient Athens existed 9,000 years ago (*Tim.* 23e; *Crit.* 111a-b) and it was “a model city [with perfect moral excellence], that is to say, a city constructed according to Plato’s own principles.” Vidal-Naquet 1992: 300.

<sup>317</sup> The fact that ancient Athens falls victim to an earthquake and is then born again not only brings to mind the earth-born race in the myth of the reversed cosmos but also Kekrops, the Athenians’ first king and ancestral parent who is autochthonous and who embodies the fundamental identity of the Athenian people. This also links to the description of the element Earth at *Tim.* 40c, as ‘the first and the eldest of all the gods’ (πρώτην καὶ πρεσβυτάτην θεῶν). In the case of Atlantis, however, the fact that it is a maritime city, and thus linked to the

demolition is permanent, whereas in the case of Athens, it is another catastrophe in a long sequence of interchanging moments of foundation and destruction – albeit this time it is especially significant because it destroys ancient Athens and gives way to a less satisfying version.<sup>318</sup>

The destruction of Atlantis is especially noteworthy when combining it with its foundation myth in the *Critias*. The myth is part of the wider foundation myth of the world when the gods furnish the earth with countries and rear up mortals whom they guide just as shepherds guide their flocks (109b-c).<sup>319</sup> Poseidon is assigned Atlantis and he designs it in

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element of water (which, according to *Tim.* 58d is mobile and non-uniform), underlines its instability.

At *Crit.* 108e, Critias asserts that Atlantis was also “sunk by earthquakes,” but the important point here is that even though the cataclysm might have been the same, Athens sinks into the earth (and, by doing so, secures its ability to rise again) and Atlantis into the ocean (and, due to the fluidity of water, is unable to rise again).

<sup>318</sup> See *Crit.* 111b, “what now remains compared with what then existed is like the skeleton of a sick man...” (πρὸς τὰ τότε τὰ νῦν οἶον νοσήσαντος σώματος ὄστᾱ).

Vidal-Naquet 1992: 302 argues that the “Athens and Atlantis of ancient lore represent the two faces of Plato’s own Athens. The former, the old primordial Athens, is what Plato would have liked the city of which he was a citizen to be; the latter is what Athens was in the age of Pericles or Cleon, an imperialistic power whose very existence constituted a threat to other Greek cities.” (See also Gill 1977: 296). I agree with Vidal-Naquet, but would also argue more generally that the former Athens embodies what Plato wishes to see in the current Athens (an idea which he pursues in the *Republic*) whereas the city to which it is reduced (‘a mere bone of the ancient city’ Vidal-Naquet 1992: 301), is the Athens of his time, which he criticizes. On the relevance of Thucydides’ history, see for example Naddaf 1994: 199-200 and Johansen 2004: 11-13.

Yet, the fact that Athens does rise again (even if it becomes a less glamorous version) also points to an element of stability. Its embodiment of both stability and instability not only underlines the cyclical nature of the story about the creation of civilization, told at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, but it also recalls one of the concepts of the myth of the reversed cosmos. Despite all its negative and destructive aspects, the fact that civilization does rise again is also reassuring, and it offers a sense of security and uniformity.

<sup>319</sup> This is comparable with one of the periods of the myth of the reversed cosmos when the Demiurge watches over the human beings. Cf. *Tim.* 35a-36d and 41d on the construction of the world soul and the human soul. Plato compares the activities of the Demiurge to that of a craftsman and the technical language he uses, which refers to that of metalworking, brings to mind the language of the true statesman in the *Statesman*, which is analogous to that of weaving. Zedda 2000: 25 argues that Plato describes, “the actual, practical series of operations needed in order to construct a model, or representation, of the world soul.”

such ‘brilliant colours’ that it (in true fashion of Platonic Utopianism) emerges as “a maritime empire of vast dimensions ruled by a federation of kings.”<sup>320</sup> A lengthy description of the layout of Atlantis follows, but the essential points are this: Poseidon is the god of Atlantis (which is why there is a temple dedicated to him and his wife, Cleito, in the centre of it, 115c), and his precepts determine the Atlantean kings’ authority over one another (118c) and ensure that their intentions are true and noble (120e).

However, as is the case in Kallipolis and the myth of the reversed cosmos, in the end even the best constitution cannot keep the kings and inhabitants of Atlantis from moral degeneration. They forget the divine teachings, succumb to human temper and lawlessness, and lose perception of what is virtuous (121a-b).<sup>321</sup> Zeus decides to discipline them in order

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Johansen 2004: 16 writes, “like all craftsman [the demiurge] used material that he found prior to the creation. This material was disorganized and chaotic before he imposed rational order [κόσμος] on it.” (Again, this underlines the initial ascending sequence of the tetralogy). Cf. *Gorgias* 508a, where Plato uses κόσμος to refer to the universal order that binds man, nature, and state together.

On the influence of the pre-Socratics who refer to a similar concept of universal order containing rational, moral and social effects, see Naddaf 1997, especially pp. 29-32, and Johansen 2004: 5.

Lastly, see *Crit.* 109c, where Plato employs nautical language that is similar to the technical language discussed above. The language Plato employs underlines the gods’ authority, which fits in with the ways in which he often uses nautical metaphors, namely as an appeal to accept the rule of the expert practitioner. (See Brock 2013: 58). This obligatory acceptance of the helmsman’s authority, and the maritime language, recalls that of Zeus in *PV*.

<sup>320</sup> Rosenmeyer 1956: 166. The fact that Poseidon is assigned Atlantis, which ultimately fails, recalls the ancient quarrel of Poseidon and Athena over Attica, which Athena (like Athens in the Atlantis myth) ultimately wins.

<sup>321</sup> Naddaf 1994: 200 n. 40 notes that the growth of the human element “seems to be anticipated by Plato since he makes the Atlantean kings descendants of both a mortal and an immortal, viz., Poseidon and Cleito.” Cf. *Tim.* 69c-d on the irrational affections of the human body, which are described as a necessary element of the immortal soul’s embodiment. See Johansen 2004: 18, “as human beings, we are fundamentally rational because of our immortal soul but we are also subject to irrational forces through our body.” These irrational forces are caused by the construction of the human body, whose biological set-up causes six rectilinear motions (44d-45b). This is why we are by necessity (i.e. by the necessary biological construction of the human body) subject to irrational motions. If our bodies were constructed differently, then they might not cause some of these motions, but then we would experience

to bring them back to their old noble lifestyle...and here, the *Critias* ends, at 121c. It is not clear what happens next but it is fair to assume that it includes a destruction of some sort. The language used suggests that Zeus employs a form of corrective justice (which would be similar to his role in *PV*): he “desired to inflict punishment upon them, to the end that when chastised they might strike a truer note” (δίκην αὐτοῖς ἐπιθεῖναι βουληθεῖς, ἵνα γένοιτο ἐμμελέστεροι σωφρονισθέντες).<sup>322</sup> As seen in the myth of the reversed cosmos, and as Rosenmeyer speculates about the ending of the *Critias*, “divine intervention is capable of reversing the cosmic trend toward degeneration.”<sup>323</sup>

This ending would provide another counterargument for the sophists’ hubristic attitude that the gods are not needed and that reliance on the human intellect is sufficient. As already seen in the *Protagoras* and the *Statesman*, ultimately Zeus (or, the Demiurge) is needed in order to (re-) distribute political wisdom and opportunities of ascent among human beings. This interpretation would also fit in with the recurrent theme of ascent and descent that shines through this chapter. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, Plato does not seem to see this corrective justice as successful, and it appears that Zeus’ lesson is a one-time lecture only, as he helps Atlantis rise again, only to lure it into attacking Athens, which he knows will be its

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other problems (75b-c). Therefore, while necessity “puts constraints on the creation,” it also operates for the best. Johansen 2004: 17. See *Tim.* 48a.

The irrational motions that run through our body reflect the points made earlier in regards to deceptive rhetoric (cf. pp. 89-92). Regardless of how rational we are (or, think we are), at the end of the day we are also emotional beings with limited capacities of reason and thus subject to the influence of rhetorical strategies, circumstances that surround us, and motions within us. This point was made during the Q&A of the ‘Rhetoric of Fear in Republican Rome: The Ciceronian Case’ talk, given by Francisco Pina Polo at the University of Birmingham on 28 June 2017.

<sup>322</sup> *Crit.* 121b-c.

<sup>323</sup> Rosenmeyer 1956: 167. Cf. *Gorgias* 478e, σωφρονίζει δικαιοτέρους ποιεῖ καὶ ἰατρικὴ γίγνεται πονηρίας ἢ δίκη. (“The justice of the court reforms us and makes us more just, and acts as a medicine for wickedness”). The court to which Socrates refers is not related to the divine justice of Zeus mentioned above, but σωφρονίζω is used in the same way, which is why it has the potential to highlight the argument above.

doom.<sup>324</sup> In this sense, the end of the *Critias* links to the beginning of the *Timaeus* (and it thus provides us with a cyclical notion within the projected tetralogy) because its degenerative aspect connects with the notions of being and becoming discussed at *Tim.* 28a.<sup>325</sup>

Ultimately, however, while these speculations emphasise the ring composition the tetralogy might have contained, the ending of the Atlantis story in the *Timaeus* shows that the real moral lesson here is, ‘hubris comes before the fall.’ The Atlanteans who seek to expand their already grand empire and who are incapable of tending to the divine elements in their polity, present us with a Protagorean portrait of men in military action who ultimately dig their own grave.<sup>326</sup> The Athenians, meanwhile, are portrayed as the superior power who “by their virtue overcome their evil opponents.”<sup>327</sup> The tale of Atlantis presents us with an ascent turned descent, triggered by hubris and forgetfulness, and it paints a picture of reverse fate: what Atlantis attempts to do to ancient Athens, happens to it instead.

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<sup>324</sup> Cf. Gill 1977: 297-8. Cf. Welliver 1977: 36. Following this interpretation, the role of Zeus here is opposite to that of the Demiurge in the *Statesman*: the former does not seem to believe in re-education whereas the latter clearly does. This brings to mind the contrast between Zeus in *PV* (where he is tyrannical and destructive) and in the *Protagoras* (where he is benevolent and giving).

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Clay 1997: 52.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Rosenmeyer 1956: 167. In this vein, “the catastrophe was merely a device to achieve this [moral] end, a detail rather than the essence of the story.” Cameron 1983: 90.

<sup>327</sup> Johansen 2004: 8. Johansen argues that this is why “the Atlantis story reads as an example of...encomiastic poetry.” He refers to *Rep.* 607a, where it says: ‘you should know that the only poetry we can admit into our city is hymns to the gods and encomia of good men.’ The fact that the philosophical discussion presented here takes place during the Panathenaea accentuates this.

See also Johansen 2004: 21, where he recalls the influence of the polities’ elements (water and earth) and argues that the reason Atlantis fails is because it seeks to expand beyond the borders of their element “by bringing water to earth.” This undertaking is described as a physical illness since “physical health consists in keeping each element within its proper boundaries.” “The political arrangements of Atlantis,” states Johansen, “allow *pleonexia* [‘the transgression of one element upon the territory of another in physical illness’] to take over in contrast to the institutionally secure justice...and moderation...of the Athenians.”

Cf. Cameron 1983: 90. “Antediluvian Athens and Atlantis both represent different aspects of the historical Athens: antediluvian Athens the sturdy, virtuous farmers of the days before the Persian Wars; Atlantis the corrupt, imperialist seapower that developed out of the Delian League.”

In this way, the speech in the *Timaeus* might serve as a proud tale that celebrates the victory of ancient Athens over Atlantis, and the story of the *Critias* (as complicated as it may be due to the sudden ending) as a reminder for the Athenian audience to remain virtuous and modest.<sup>328</sup> Both dialogues thus inform the next chapters because they show once again the limits of human reason, the inevitability of recurrent events, the impact divine elements can have, and that ascent can be exchanged for descent anytime. More precisely, as the permanent descent of Atlantis makes clear, it shows that a divine craftsman (Poseidon) can found a polity, and that an absence of a divinity (or, divine attributes) can destroy it again.<sup>329</sup> The foundation myth of Atlantis implies that it mainly exists because of its divine elements; when these begin to wither, so does the city itself. This notion then continues to question the optimistic Protagorean opinion of human reason, and it also reinforces the Platonic view that everything that comes into existence must also decline.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Gill 1977: 298 notes, “there are hints that Athens’ history could be an influential model here also. It was by the overweening ambition of its Sicilian expedition that, in Thucydides’ account, post-Periclean Athens provoked her own downfall.” Gill continues, “in essence, the story was intended to be a politico-philosophical myth constructed out of historical ingredient, and specifically designed as a cautionary tale—and possibly a protreptic—for an Athenian audience.”

Finally, the Atlanteans’ attitude to luxuries, and their eventual inability to deal with them, also brings to mind Lycurgus’ reforms in Sparta (as described by Plutarch, *Lyc.* 9.4), which put a stop to the importation of foreign luxuries, and Xenophanes’ criticism of useless luxuries (fr. 3), mentioned in the introduction. See also *Laws* 742a: no private individual in Magnesia is allowed to own any gold or silver, but only the currency needed for everyday life in order to avoid scenarios like these (Cf. 705b).

<sup>329</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 41a. Moreover, as stated previously at *Tim.* 22d-e, it is the gods, not the humans, who cause the recurrent periods of destruction in the *Timaeus*. Unlike the Demiurge in the *Statesman*, who is benevolent and educational, the gods in the *Timaeus* destroy rather than re-create and re-educate, which links to their portrayal in the *Critias*, as noted above.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. *Rep.* 546a.

## VII. The (Symbolic) Consequences of Poor Political Deliberation and Discourse

The Promethean cycles discussed at the beginning of this chapter and the political sequences analysed in the *Statesman*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Timaeus*, as well as the ambiguous nature of the *Critias*, all focus on human beings and their nature as political animals. The *Gorgias* portrays the significance of rhetoric in that regard because it demonstrates, as Aristotle later does, the ways in which the power of speech can be used “to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust.”<sup>331</sup> Moreover, by examining questions such as whether it is possible to teach political virtue reliably and permanently, and to swap recurrent political events for genuine progress, they also focus on the ultimate destiny of human beings. The cyclical notion of the *Prometheia* and its sequences of ascent and descent; the tale of recurrence in the *Timaeus*; the fate of Atlantis; the circular tale of the myth of the reversed cosmos, and the metaphorical use of the word *πάλιν* in the *Statesman*, all investigate the development of human beings as political animals. The difficulty of providing a credible answer to the problem of how to best organise societies is clear throughout. Certainly, as seen in the discussions above, approaching the answer to this question from a mere rational point of view is met with great challenges and does not really provide the responses that are sought.

It might thus be wise, in fashion of the Stranger in the *Statesman*, to start again from a new starting-point and approach the question from a different direction.<sup>332</sup> Firchow asserts that the question of the meaning of human life and development “cannot be asked (or answered) logically, but only symbolically.”<sup>333</sup> This is why this question frequently appears in the utopian writings of the late nineteenth-century, “a period often designated as the Age of

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<sup>331</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253a, ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον... ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἔστι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. *Stat.* 268d. *πάλιν* τοίνυν ἐξ ἄλλης ἀρχῆς δεῖ καθ’ ἑτέραν ὁδὸν πορευθῆναι τινα.

<sup>333</sup> Firchow 2007: 25.

Symbolism.”<sup>334</sup> Wells’ *The Time Machine* is a representative work of that period and it is clear that it examines the question of what will eventually become of the human intellect and civilization.<sup>335</sup> Incorporating elements similar to those of the first cycle of the myth of the reversed cosmos and the progressive degeneration of the Atlanteans, Wells imagines “a canonic sociobiological ‘converging series of forms of gradually diminishing complexity’ as devolution retraverses the path of evolution backward to a *fin du globe*.”<sup>336</sup>

I have chosen to discuss *The Time Machine*, because it shows how the ancient texts examined in this thesis can be compared with modern political thought when connecting them with More’s *Utopia* in the process. In particular, looking at the *Statesman*, *Utopia*, and *The Time Machine* as another ‘ascent-turned-descent’ sequence, they illustrate what might happen if More’s solutions to the problems discussed in the Platonic dialogues were realised. Precisely, we would look at this: Plato (inability to understand rhetoric from different factions): More (elimination of different factions and the need to understand them): Wells (consequences of the removal of diverse political debate). As my analysis of Wells’ work

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<sup>334</sup> Firchow 2007: 25.

<sup>335</sup> Borges 1952: 87 praises Wells’ earlier novels (amongst others, *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *The Invisible Man*) because “they tell a story symbolic of processes that are somehow inherent in all human destinies. ....Work that endures is always capable of an infinite and plastic ambiguity; it is all things to all men...it is a mirror that reflects the reader’s own features and it is also a map of the world.”

<sup>336</sup> Suvin 1973: 336. The quotation in the sentence is taken from Wells’ teacher T.H. Huxley’s 1894 *Evolution and Ethics: Prolegomena*. It is worth quoting the entire paragraph here in the footnote to highlight its relevance. “That the state of nature, at any time, is a temporary phase of a process of incessant change, which has been going on for innumerable ages, appears to me to be a proposition as well established as any in modern history. Palaeontology assures us, in addition, that the ancient philosophers who, with less reason, held the same doctrine, erred in supposing that the phases formed a cycle, exactly repeating the past, exactly foreshadowing the future, in their rotations. On the contrary, it furnishes us with conclusive reasons for thinking that, if every link in the ancestry of these humble indigenous plants had been preserved and were accessible to us, the whole would present a converging series of forms of gradually diminishing complexity, until, at some period in the history of the earth, far more remote than any of which organic remains have yet been discovered, they would merge in those low groups among which the boundaries between animal and vegetable life become effaced.” Huxley 1894: 3-4.

shows, the initial ascent seen in *Utopia* turns out to be a descent in the end, because the absence of different factions and communication styles, does not actually solve the problems that come with the presence of them.

Like More, Wells presents his imagination in style of a travelogue that recalls not only the Lucianic fantastic (such as the journey to the moon) but also the adventurous tales of Vespucci, Hythloday, and Gulliver (especially the voyage to the floating island of Laputa). Indeed, in *The Time Machine*, Wells creates a world, which is, like Lucian's moon, both "removed but also connected to our world [and] it offers the reader a unique and subversive perspective on 'reality'..."<sup>337</sup> The sailing vessels used in the earlier accounts may have been swapped for a time machine but the art of transportation to an unknown and differently organised society is the same.<sup>338</sup> The way in which the story is told is also comparable with that of *Utopia*: like Hythloday, the time traveller tells it in his home to a small group of friends.

Again, two overarching properties of narrative art are used: while More combines the satiric with the serious, Wells weaves together the progressive with the regressive and thus "unites the two antithetical characteristics of the bourgeois ideology of progress and entropy."<sup>339</sup> In this vein, he echoes the concept of Aeschylus in the *Prometheia* and that of Plato in the *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias*, as he too combines elements of ascent and descent. Additionally, like More, Wells "takes up and refunctions the ancient *mundus inversus*;"<sup>340</sup> and he imagines an inversion of Social Darwinism brought about by political

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<sup>337</sup> Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 216.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Fitting 2010: 139.

<sup>339</sup> Jameson 2005: 127. That being said, *The Time Machine* certainly has a satirical edge as well since many of its aspects do bear relevance to Wells' contemporary world and its problems.

<sup>340</sup> Suvin 1973: 345.

and social atrophy (again recalling aspects of the myth of the reversed cosmos and the tale of Atlantis).<sup>341</sup>

The atrophic notion of *The Time Machine* is emphasised when relating it to Socrates' epistemological science of measurement discussed in the *Protagoras*. Firchow points out that the other meaning of 'time machine' is, of course, "a machine for telling time, a meaning Wells is fully aware of."<sup>342</sup> The symbolic significance of the dual meaning of the time machine is clear: not only does it travel through time (and, more importantly, to the end of time) but it also intends to measure, and predict, our political and social progress throughout the ages. (In this manner, like the subtitle of *Utopia*, it is also both entertaining and beneficial at the same time). More specifically, it shows the limits of the human intellect and the consequences of false, or imprecise, measurements and mistaken judgments.

Furthermore, by portraying a political and social degeneration, Wells not only imagines the consequences of false measurement but also the consequences of a lack of measurement altogether. In the case of *The Time Machine*, it is clear that the absence of both measurement and political deliberation in general is brought about by the achievement of utopia as well as by the (false) sense of security human beings subsequently developed. As the time traveller reports: "...the balanced civilisation that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now far fallen into decay. The too-perfect security of the Upper-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence."<sup>343</sup> The human intellect, the time traveller says, "had set itself

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<sup>341</sup> This recalls A.L. Huxley's fear noted in the introduction that, one day, human beings might stop engaging with politics altogether. (Cf. p. 49 n. 143). However, unlike Huxley, who ends *Brave New World* on a relatively positive and progressive note, Wells ends *The Time Machine* with a notion of de-evolution and regress.

<sup>342</sup> Firchow 2007: 30.

<sup>343</sup> *The Time Machine*, 49. The narrator of the story makes a similar point in regards to the time traveller in the epilogue, for he says: "He, I know...thought but cheerlessly of the

steadfastly towards comfort and ease, a balanced society with security and permanency as its watchword, it had attained its hopes” only to now face its decline.<sup>344</sup>

The time traveller’s observations recall those of Socrates and Glaucon in *Rep.* 546 in many important respects. When discussing the potential future of their city, Socrates asserts, “It is hard for a city composed in this way to change, but everything that comes into being must decay. Not even a constitution such as this will last for ever. It, too, must face

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Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilisation only a foolish heaping that must inevitably destroy its makers in the end.” *The Time Machine*, 91. Cf. *Crit.* 121a-c.

<sup>344</sup> *The Time Machine*, 79. See also p. 78, “I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect had been. It had committed suicide.”

Wells’ description of the declining civilization recalls the following passage from Appian’s *The Third Punic War* 20.132. “Scipio, beholding this city, which had flourished 700 years from its foundation and had ruled over so many lands, islands, and seas, rich with arms and fleets, elephants and money, equal to the mightiest monarchies but far surpassing them in bravery and high spirit (since without ships or arms, and in the face of famine, it had sustained continuous war for three years), now come to its ends in total destruction – Scipio, beholding this spectacle, is said to have shed tears and publicly lamented the fortune of the enemy.” Specifically, Appian writes, Scipio quoted the following from *Il.* 6.531-3: “the day will come when sacred Troy must die, Priam must die and all his people with him, Priam who hurls the strong ash spear.”

Cf. Gibbon LXXI.I. “[Rome’s] primeval state, such as she might appear in a remote age, when Evander entertained the stranger of Troy, has been delineated by the fancy of Virgil. This Tarpeian rock was then a savage and solitary thicket: in the time of the poet, it was crowned with the golden roofs of a temple; the temple is overthrown, the gold has been pillaged, the wheel of fortune has accomplished her revolution, and the sacred ground is again disfigured with thorns and brambles. The hill of the Capitol, on which we sit, was formerly the head of the Roman Empire, the citadel of the earth, the terror of kings; illustrated by the footsteps of so many triumphs, enriched with the spoils and tributes of so many nations. This spectacle of the world, how is it fallen! How changed! How defaced! The path of victory is obliterated by vines, and the benches of the senators are concealed by a dunghill. Cast your eyes on the Palatine hill, and seek among the shapeless and enormous fragments the marble theatre, the obelisks, the colossal statues, the porticos of Nero's palace: survey the other hills of the city, the vacant space is interrupted only by ruins and gardens. The forum of the Roman people, where they assembled to enact their laws and elect their magistrates, is now enclosed for the cultivation of pot-herbs, or thrown open for the reception of swine and buffaloes. The public and private edifices, that were founded for eternity, lie prostrate, naked, and broken, like the limbs of a mighty giant; and the ruin is the more visible, from the stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune.”

The passages from Appian, and the inclusion of the fall of Troy, and Gibbon bring to mind the sequences of degeneration seen in Aeschylus, Plato, and Polybius, and they emphasise the ephemerality of constitutions, which, as the time traveller witnesses in the future, has not changed throughout time.

dissolution.” (χαλεπὸν μὲν κινηθῆναι πόλιν οὕτω συστᾶσαν: ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ γενομένῳ παντὶ φθορὰ ἐστίν, οὐδ’ ἢ τοιαύτη σύστασις τὸν ἅπαντα μενεῖ χρόνον, ἀλλὰ λυθήσεται).<sup>345</sup> Thus, even Kallipolis cannot last forever - and this humorously contradicts Hythloday’s claim that Utopia will never decline at the same time as it underlines its satiric element because this appears to be a claim so bold that it is not even made by Plato in regards to Kallipolis (or Atlantis for that matter).<sup>346</sup> More importantly, it reflects both Socrates’ concern in the *Protagoras* that clever parents and teachers are not necessarily able to pass their knowledge onto the next generation, and the significance of *καιρός* in the *Statesman*. As Socrates asserts at 546a-b:

γένους δὲ ὑμετέρου εὐγονίας τε καὶ ἀφορίας, καίπερ ὄντες σοφοί, οὓς ἡγεμόνας πόλεως ἐπαιδεύσασθε, οὐδὲν μᾶλλον λογισμῶ μετ’ αἰσθήσεως τεύξονται, ἀλλὰ πάρεσιν αὐτοῦς καὶ γεννήσουσι παῖδάς ποτε οὐ δέον.

Now, the people you have educated to be leaders in your city, even though they are wise, still won’t, through calculation together with sense perception, hit upon the fertility and barrenness of the human species, but it will escape them, and so they will at some time beget children when they ought not to do so.

The consequence of this miscalculation is, as discussed in the section on the *Statesman*, that there will be marriages taking place at the wrong time and “the children will be neither good natured nor fortunate.” (οὐκ εὐφουεῖς οὐδ’ εὐτυχεῖς παῖδες ἔσονται).<sup>347</sup> Even the best of these children, who will eventually become Guardians, will not be able to maintain the structure of

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<sup>345</sup> *Rep.* 546a. This brings to mind Polybius’ cycle of political revolution, the natural course of events during which constitutions change, transform, and return to their original stage (6.9.10). Like Kallipolis, the ‘perfect’ Rome is not going to last: “...especially in the case of the Roman state will this method [i.e. the perception that constitutions can change] enable us to arrive at a knowledge of its formation, growth, and greatest perfection, and likewise of the change for the worse which is sure to follow some day” (6.10.12).

<sup>346</sup> In fact, this claim is so ludicrous that it does not even apply to Zeus’ regime in *PV*. As shown earlier, even his autocratic rule is bound to change eventually due to the compromise made with Prometheus in the third play.

<sup>347</sup> *Rep.* 546d. In this case, it appears to be a literal miscalculation. At 546b-c, Socrates mentions different numbers and asserts that it is the “whole geometrical number [that] controls better and worse births.” He refers to the Muses’ story of the geometrical number, which in turn provides the explanation for how civil war breaks out. See *Rep.* 545d-e.

Kallipolis. “First, they will have less consideration for music and poetry than they ought, then they will neglect physical training, so that your young people will become less well educated in music and poetry.” (ἡμῶν πρῶτον ἄρξονται ἀμελεῖν φύλακες ὄντες, παρ’ ἔλαττον τοῦ δέοντος ἡγησάμενοι τὰ μουσικῆς, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ γυμναστικῆς, ὅθεν ἀμουσότεροι γενήσονται ὑμῖν οἱ νέοι).<sup>348</sup> The eventual consequences of this, as mentioned previously, are civil war and the decline of the original constitution of Kallipolis.<sup>349</sup>

Like the time traveller’s explanation of the decline of humanity in the future, the reason for the decline of Kallipolis is based on the degeneration of the human intellect (which underlines its limits at the same time: it is not eternal and can decline), which sets in motion the decay of knowledge, arithmetic, and ability to notice *καιρός*. Kastely notes likewise: “The tale that Socrates tells of the collapse of the Kallipolis begins not with a challenge by any ambitious or aggressive individual or class. It does not even directly flow from the unruliness of desire; rather, it begins as a simple problem of calculation.”<sup>350</sup> He continues: “However skilful the rulers are at calculation, they inevitably make errors, and these errors are consequential.”<sup>351</sup> The way Kallipolis is set up prevents individuals or classes from rebelling against the societal order (and thus eliminates a potential threat); but it does not prevent the ruling class from making fundamentally human errors.

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<sup>348</sup> *Rep.* 546d. Cf. *Rep.* 424c, οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ κινεῖνται μουσικῆς τρόποι ἄνευ πολιτικῶν νόμων τῶν μεγίστων. (‘When modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change with them’). This point is made primarily to refer to the dangers of innovations (424b), but it also underlines the decline of Kallipolis described above, which begins with a lack of interest in music.

<sup>349</sup> *Rep.* 547a-c. Cf. Bell 2015: 123.

<sup>350</sup> Kastely 2015: 165.

<sup>351</sup> Kastely 2015: 165. The following fragment (592) from *Tereus* may have referred to something similar in regards to the, at times, erroneous nature of human beings, τὰν γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ζῶαν ποικιλομήτιδες ἄται πημάτων πάσαις μεταλλάσσουσιν ὥραις. (‘For the life of men is transformed by the cunning wiles of ruinous error that bring calamities at all seasons’).

This brings to mind the point made in regards to Simonides' poem in the *Protagoras*. Human beings may be able to maintain true political knowledge, and the (arguably) best constitution for a while; however, because human beings have limited means (which includes even the Guardians in Kallipolis and the citizens of Atlantis), this knowledge and maintenance of the best constitution is also limited and will eventually wane. Socrates' allusion to the Muses' story of the geometrical number underlines the notion expressed in the poem that only the gods have this ability. Van Noorden writes, "the notorious obscurity of the Muses' long mathematical exposition reinforces their point that humans *cannot* explain and so hold on to perfection."<sup>352</sup> The consequences of the lack of perfection and proper calculation will eventually lead to the previously mentioned civil war, which in turn leads to a phased deterioration of Kallipolis. The phases are increasingly worse in corruption and inadequacy: first, there is a Spartan-like timocracy, then an oligarchy, then a democracy, and then, at the end, there is a tyranny.<sup>353</sup> In this way, like the time traveller's observation of the societies in

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<sup>352</sup> Van Noorden 2015: 134.

<sup>353</sup> *Rep.* 547b-562b. Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* V for his list of various regime changes. Again, this sequence of degeneration is comparable with Polybius' order of decline and his identification of six types of constitutions. Monarchy: tyranny: aristocracy: oligarchy: democracy: ochlocracy (6.4.7-10). Polybius asserts, "The truth of what I have just said will be quite clear to anyone who pays due attention to such beginnings, origins, and changes as are in each case natural. For he alone who has seen how each form naturally arises and develops, will be able to see when, how, and where the growth, perfection, change, and end of each are likely to occur again" (6.4.11-12). Cf. *Laws* 676b-c:

μῶν οὖν οὐ μυρίαί μὲν ἐπὶ μυρίαῖς ἡμῖν γέγονασι πόλεις ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ, κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τοῦ πλήθους λόγον οὐκ ἐλάττους ἐφθαρμέναι; πεπολιτευμένοι δ' αὖ πάσας πολιτείας πολλάκις ἐκασταχοῦ; καὶ τοτὲ μὲν ἐξ ἐλαττόνων μείζους, τοτὲ δ' ἐκ μείζονων ἐλάττους, καὶ χεῖρους ἐκ βελτιόνων γέγονασι καὶ βελτίους ἐκ χειρόνων;

During that time, don't we find, thousands upon thousands of cities have existed, and by the same reckoning, as many have been destroyed. And as for each one's social and political arrangements at various times, haven't they been of every possible kind, as cities have at one time grown greater from smaller, and then smaller from greater, and worse from better, and better from worse?" (Trans. Griffith, adapted).

the future, Socrates' description of the decline of the best city resembles that of an almost linear regression.

This decline, which is based on the lack of human perfection, links to Protagoras' atheism at the beginning of the chapter and his assumption that it is sufficient to rely exclusively on the human intellect (cf. pp. 58-9). This assumption, which, as written previously, marks a change in thought because it promotes the idea that human destiny is shaped by rationality and persuasive speech alone, rather than by the intervention of the gods, now appears in a new light. Especially, the questions that arose earlier, namely whether the social development that follows from this change in thought has any fixed foundations and whether it is possible to live without a divine anchor in (Greek) ethics, are now all the more significant. The declines of the constitutions stated above (and the decay of Atlantis), which are evidently triggered by the limits of humanity, show that the social development that follows after the ascent of man in the *Prometheia*, is not fixed but loose, and that it is not possible to establish just constitutions that last eternally without a form of divine anchor. (As seen in the myth of the reversed cosmos and the Prometheus myth in the *Protagoras*, the Demiurge and Zeus have to step in eventually to fix issues that humans cannot fix themselves. Likewise, in the *Timaeus*, the universe is held together solely by the Demiurge's will).

The absence of the Demiurge informs the pessimistic picture of the phased degeneration that Wells' time traveller experiences in the future. Specifically, the further he travels, the worse the de-evolution gets. First, there are the Eloi in the year 802,701; then there is the crab-like creature several years later; and another thirty millions years later, there is no trace of animal life left but only an eclipse, which marks the end of the phased

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Cf. Herodotus, 1.5, "I will cover minor and major human settlements equally, because most of those which were important in the past have diminished in significance by now, and those which were great in my own time were small in times past. I will mention both equally because I know that human happiness never remains long in the same place."

degeneration, and also the end of time.<sup>354</sup> The consequences that arise from a mere human mathematical error are dire and they illustrate, similarly to Plato's concern, "what a human political community might do or suffer when the guidance of reason alone fails."<sup>355</sup> In this vein, both Plato's and Wells' visions are shaped by anthropological regression, and the decline they describe "starts with a human being (and a city) in a natural condition and decomposes it piece by piece."<sup>356</sup>

In *The Time Machine*, the regression also begins in an aristocracy and the time traveller alludes to the horrors the former 'human political community' suffers from because of the decline of human intellect. Referring to the Morlock's insatiable appetite, he reports:<sup>357</sup>

Then I tried to preserve myself from the horror that was coming upon me, by regarding it as a rigorous punishment of human selfishness. Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him. I even tried a Carlyle-like scorn of this wretched aristocracy in decay.

Both Plato and Wells portray symbolically the potential consequences of the Protagorean reliance on reason alone and of the problems examined in the Platonic dialogues discussed earlier. As reason and human intellect lose control, and rulers (or ruling classes) become more and more susceptible to their appetites and use various excuses (such as necessity) to justify these appetites, order and structure decrease as well.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Cf. *Tim.*38b, χρόνος δ' οὖν μετ' οὐρανοῦ γέγονεν, ἵνα ἅμα γεννηθέντες ἅμα καὶ λυθῶσιν. ("Time, then, came into existence along with the Heaven, to the end that having been generated together they might also be dissolved together").

<sup>355</sup> Hitz 2010: 109.

<sup>356</sup> Hitz 2010: 109.

<sup>357</sup> *The Time Machine*, 62.

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Hitz 2010: 107 and 122. The role appetite plays in this recalls both the position of Zeus in *PV* and Callicles' positive opinion of appetite in the *Gorgias*. Both Zeus and Callicles prefer the rule of appetite to that of established legal systems, which also take care of the weaker, and not just the stronger. However, relating this to the downfall of Kallipolis,

Especially, when there is no reason or human intellect, there is also no ability at all to weigh sight and sound carefully, and to make decisions based on those measurements. As argued earlier, this is a difficult craft to begin with (it is, after all, an error in measurement that sets in motion the decline in the first place), but as it deteriorates alongside reason, it will soon be impossible to use altogether. In this way, it also becomes clear that the conflicts triggered by a lack of understanding among different factions, as discussed in the *Statesman*, are taken to a whole other level. Hitz asserts that the conflicts that bring down the regimes in the *Republic* must be understood “not as conflicts among the multifarious appetites, all competing for first place, but as conflicts between weak rational or lawful structures and appetitive forces, personal or political.”<sup>359</sup>

Furthermore, the political cycles analysed earlier are also taken to a new level because we have now reached the final consequences. It is clear, as mentioned previously, that the time traveller sees traces of these cycles, and the past in general, in the future. The buildings of the Eloi remind him of the culture of the Phoenicians (“I saw suggestions of old Phoenician decorations as I passed through”), and he sees a sculpture that evokes the image of the Sphinx in him (“it was of white marble, in shape something like a winged sphinx”).<sup>360</sup> More importantly, he finds decaying books (“The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of it, I presently recognized as the decaying vestiges of books”), which highlight the decay of

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Atlantis, and Hitz’s argument, the potential consequences are clear, as a rule led by appetite rather than strong lawful structures, can lead to conflicts, which in turn can bring down the entire regime. This in turn recalls the theme of ascent and descent seen in *PV*.

See also *Tim.73a* on the consequences of appetite related to food and drink, παρέχουσα ἀπληστίαν, διὰ γαστριμαργίαν ἀφιλόσοφον καὶ ἄμουσον πᾶν ἀποτελοῖ τὸ γένος, ἀνυπήκοον τοῦ θειοτάτου τῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν. (“...causing insatiate appetite, whereby the whole kind by reason of its gluttony would be rendered devoid of philosophy and of culture, and disobedient to the most divine part we possess”). Cf. *Laws* 696e: self-control is the precondition of all other virtues (wisdom, justice, and courage).

<sup>359</sup> Hitz 2010: 123.

<sup>360</sup> *The Time Machine*, 26 and 21.

civilization and of what it used to contain, namely writing, deliberation, and knowledge.<sup>361</sup> As the time traveller observes when he looks at the changed constellations of the stars: "...all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organizations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence. Instead were these frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry..."<sup>362</sup>

The notion of forgetfulness the time traveller mentions is especially noteworthy because not only have the human beings of the future forgotten their ancestry, they have also forgotten how to make fire. The time-traveller observes: "In this decadence, too, the art of fire-making had been forgotten on the earth," and they had also "forgotten about matches."<sup>363</sup> The fact that they do not know how to make fire, for they possess neither the art nor the modern tools, emphasises the progressive de-evolution the time traveller witnesses further. Particularly, it brings to mind a pivotal event in human evolution, namely the discovery of fire, which subsequently led to various cultural advancements. Thus, even though the time traveller finds himself several hundred thousand years in the future, it feels as if he has gone back in time by the same amount of years. Certainly, the traces of the past he sees in the world of the Eloi go then back even further than the Phoenician civilization because they bring him back all the way to some of the earliest human communities, which existed before the discovery of fire.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> *The Time Machine*, 67.

<sup>362</sup> *The Time Machine*, 61. Cf. *Crit.* 111b, *Tim.* 23b-c. Cf. also the beginning of Herodotus' *Histories* the purpose of which 'is to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time, and to preserve the fame of the important and remarkable achievements produced by both Greeks and non-Greeks...' In Wells' narrative, the anxiety that the marvellous achievements of men may be erased by time, has become reality.

<sup>363</sup> *The Time Machine*, 72 and 36. This contrasts with *Tim.* 48b, ἀλλ' ὡς εἰδόςιν πῦρ ὅτι ποτέ ἔστιν. ("But we assume that men know what fire is").

<sup>364</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 23a-b.

More importantly, they bring him back to the world of Epimetheus (and thus the world before Prometheus and the ascent of man), where there is no stolen fire available. While Prometheus' rebellious act in *Prometheus Pyrphoros* marks the beginning of human civilization, the time traveller now faces its ending. This emphasises the consequences of the divine absence further. As the Platonic Protagoras remarks in his version of the Prometheus myth, the only reason human beings attain fire (which triggers their social development) is through Prometheus' rebellious act against the gods; and the only reason they gain political wisdom is through Zeus' intervention when he steps in to fix the chaos that he sees.<sup>365</sup> Now, however, the sequence of the *Protagoras* (cf. p. 101) has gone from ascending to descending, as it has changed from Epimetheus (primeval stage): Prometheus (possession of fire and civic wisdom): Zeus (possession of political wisdom) to Zeus: Prometheus: Epimetheus. This continues to explain the lack of development and incessant regression.

The absence of the Promethean arts also explains the forgotten skills of measurement and calculation. As Prometheus exclaims at *PV* 459-6, "Look: I gave them numbering, chief of all the stratagems." (μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἕξοχον σοφισμάτων, ἐξηῦρον αὐτοῖς).<sup>366</sup> Additionally, it explains the lack of reason. At 443-5, Prometheus says, "Still, listen to the miseries that beset mankind – how they were witless before and I made them have sense and endowed them with reason." (τὰν βροτοῖς δὲ πῆματα ἀκούσαθ', ὡς σφας νηπίους ὄντας τὸ πρὶν ἔννοους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους).<sup>367</sup> Years later, Plutarch builds on to this claim and equates Prometheus with reason. He asserts that if man had neither mind nor reason, his life would be nothing better than that of wild animals (οὕτως ἔνεκα τῶν αἰσθήσεων, εἰ μὴ νοῦν μηδὲ λόγον ὁ

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<sup>365</sup> Cf. *Prot.* 321e-322e.

<sup>366</sup> Trans. Nussbaum.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 53a-b.

ἄνθρωπος ἔσχεν, οὐδὲν ἂν διέφερε τῷ βίῳ τῶν θηρίων).<sup>368</sup> However, it is neither by fortune nor by chance that we surpass them, “but Prometheus (that is, reason) is the cause” (νῦν δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ τύχης οὐδ’ αὐτομάτως περίεσμεν αὐτῶν καὶ κρατοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ ὁ Προμηθεύς, τουτέστιν ὁ λογισμὸς αἴτιος).<sup>369</sup> These remarks highlight further the fact that the world the time traveller finds in the future is fundamentally Epimethean.

The Epimethean aspects of it become especially clear when listening to the time traveller’s description of the Eloi and the Morlocks who, despite their human form, behave more like animals than human beings do. He says, “These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon – probably saw to the breeding of it.”<sup>370</sup> This animal-like behaviour recalls not only the Polybian cycle of governments, which begins and ends with catastrophe and ‘herd-like’ demeanour but also the de-evolutionary aspects of the myth of the reversed cosmos. For it continues to show that the society the time traveller encounters in the future bears closer resemblance to the early human communities from many hundred-thousand years ago that are marked by chaos and primeval instincts, than to a highly advanced civilization.<sup>371</sup>

In this vein, these aspects also draw attention to some of the points raised in the introduction, especially to the questions that I pose about the differences between human beings and animals. I assert there that the accounts which grant speech to animals, and which endow them with the faculty of the human mind, (such as Aesop’s animal fables,

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<sup>368</sup> Plutarch, *De Fortuna* 98c.

<sup>369</sup> Plutarch, *De Fortuna* 98c. This also brings to mind the following fragment from Platon, *προμηθεΐα γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀνθρώποις ὁ νοῦς*. (“For men the mind is something Promethean”). Fr.145, Syncellus p. 174.22 Mosshammer.

<sup>370</sup> *The Time Machine*, 62. Cf. *PV* 452-3. Before Prometheus came along, mankind “dwelt underground, like tiny ants, in the sunless recesses of caves.” Cf. *Laws* 766a.

<sup>371</sup> This also echoes the point made earlier about the circular movements seen in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, ‘everything returns to what it was before, and what has been will be again.’ Cf. p. 113. Cf. Guthrie 1957: 63.

Aristophanes' *Birds*, and Plutarch's *Gryllus*) offer insight into the merits and faults of human beings. In Wells, however, it is the reverse scenario: human intellect and speech exist only in an elementary form, and the future human's lifestyle recalls that of animals rather than that of human beings.<sup>372</sup> In this way, much like the stories that feature clever animals who have been given speech and reason, so they can teach us something about our institutions and ourselves, *The Time Machine* teaches us a similar lesson, just the other way around.

It shows not only where the unadulterated Protagorean trust in the human intellect can lead but also what happens when the development of civilization and evolution of language (which go hand in hand) are inverted, and when declining linguistic capabilities eliminate a trait that is often seen as uniquely human. (I analyse this argument more in the next chapter). Particularly, the elimination of language also removes the ability to establish and live in a community with a complex societal and political structure, rather than in an animal-like existence whose only aim it is to eat other, weaker, animals. Wells realizes that, "less verbal regulation would allow the resurgence of primitive instincts, with speech degenerating into unconscious noise."<sup>373</sup> The time traveller comments:<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> See Nevins 2016: 213. This animal-like lifestyle brings to mind Polybius' concept of cyclical degeneration, seen earlier (cf. n. 353). At 6.5.4 and 6.9.9, he makes clear "that the series [of degeneration] began and ended with the same socio-political order- an elementary form of monarchy. This [elementary form of] monarchy preceded [the form of] monarchy in the first instance and followed mob rule in the last, and it was understood to be the natural rule over men when their behaviour and conditions of existence are the most animal-like." Thus, using Polybius' model, "one could...prognosticate not only the most likely immediate destiny of a given constitution but also the eventual reversion of all political societies to a primitive state, a state which he associated with bestiality or the vulgar herd, and with the emergence of a strong monarchical master [in this case, the Morlocks]." Trompf 1979: 6.

See also the discussion of political change at *Laws* III, especially 676-680, which begins and ends with a comparable notion of catastrophe.

<sup>373</sup> Abberley 2015: 83. Wells echoes his teacher here. See Huxley 1863: 132. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, this assertion readily brings to mind that of many ancient philosophers who assert that one of the most important differences between humans and animals is that we speak and they do not. It also recalls *Gorg.* 452e, because with the

Either I missed some subtle point, or [the Eloi's] language was excessively simple – almost exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs. There seemed to be few, if any, abstract terms, or little use of figurative language. Their sentences were usually simple and two words, and I failed to convey or understand any but the simplest propositions.

This emphasises further the Epimethean features of the narrative: without language, books, and writing (as stated earlier, the only books that are left are a 'sombre wilderness of rotting paper'), "society's accumulation of knowledge and ideas falls away, returning humans to raw instinct."<sup>375</sup>

At *Politics* 1253, Aristotle asserts that it is because of their reasoning speech that human beings set themselves apart from other animals in the household and city (I will analyse this more in the next chapter); however, with the return to a raw instinct and forgotten teachings of former civilizations, this ability, too, has vanished. The Eloi's means of communication, which are too rudimentary to allow any genuine political development, bring to mind the second period of the myth of the reversed cosmos. Except this time, comparably with the ending of Atlantis, there is no divine being who steps in and saves human beings

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resurgence of primeval instincts and the disappearance of skilfully articulated speech, so the 'best and greatest of human affairs,' i.e. persuasion, vanishes too.

<sup>374</sup> *The Time Machine*, 39. Cf. Plato, *Sophist* 262a-c, *Crat.* 425a and 431b, Aristotle, *Poet.* 1456b, and Plutarch, *Quaest. Plat.* X. These passages, while emphasizing the decline of language the time traveller observes, also make clear that, despite everything, the Eloi still manage to combine the two most fundamental components of sentences, namely nouns and verbs, which puts their speech above that of animals.

<sup>375</sup> Abberley 2015: 83. Cf. *Tim.* 23b. This brings to mind section 262 of the *Sophist*, mentioned earlier (cf. p. 93 n. 248), where it is said that speech achieves good by weaving together verbs and names. Without proper speech, the ability to do this diminishes, and thus also the ability to create good things.

The Morlocks may exhibit a form of political behaviour when they feed, clothe, and eat the Eloi, as that does bring to mind Aristotle, *HA* 488a where he states that there are some animals, such as bees, wasps, ants, and cranes, who share one common activity and thus a kind of political organisation. The Morlocks certainly share a common activity, but ultimately their demeanour is too rudimentary in order for them to establish any political organization that could reach the level of the now decayed institutions. This is primarily due to their lack of reasoning speech, which prevents them from establishing 'the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust.'

from their destiny (again, this highlights the implications of Protagoras' hubristic opinions of the human intellect and the consequences of the missing divine 'anchor'). This time, the world continues to deteriorate. As the world deteriorates, so reason and speech, too, disappear and eventually it reaches a point where the boundary between human and animal is so blurred that it is difficult to ascertain to which category they really belong.

### **VIII. Chapter Conclusion**

Wells' *The Time Machine* reflects the problems examined in Aeschylus and the Platonic dialogues in the following symbolic ways. Like the power struggle between Zeus and Prometheus in *PV*, the myth of the reversed cosmos (and the theme of change that is present in both texts), Wells' story is a tale that is both a product and an interpretation of political existence. More importantly, like the *Prometheia* and the myth, it is both of and beyond the polis. As stated previously, like the declines of Kallipolis and Atlantis, it serves as a portrayal of what might happen to a human political community when the guidance of reason fails. It also shows what might happen when human beings only subscribe to rhetoric and external factors, such as appearance and temporary security. In this way, as discussed earlier, the *Prometheia*, the Platonic dialogues, and *The Time Machine* provide a (symbolic) answer to the question posed at the beginning of the chapter. 'If the ascent of man and the development of law and politics depends solely on who is the most eloquent and clever, then how does this affect our political virtue, justice, and social system?'

Specifically, the discussion in this chapter shows that dependence on speech and intellect is not sufficient. By portraying the limits of human reason and the consequences of the hubristic attitude that reason will always be there to establish systems of justice and

politics, it makes clear that Protagoras' dismissal of a divine anchor is foolish, regardless of how comfortable and secure he thinks his situation may be. Especially, the analysis of the different factions in the *Statesman*, and their general inability to understand one another due to the limits of their intellect, show that an exclusive reliance on the intellect may bear dangerous consequences. Additionally, it seems clear that the neglect of reason and education (potentially triggered by the assumption that those things will always be there), and the subsequent growth of human elements such as appetite and greed (which is what happens to the Atlanteans), are the cumulative causes of the declines of the regimes mentioned here.

Hitz argues, referring to Plato's *Republic*, "it is the neglect of reason that allows for the growth and fragmentation of appetite - and so ultimately it is what drives the division, violence, and instability found in bad regimes."<sup>376</sup> In this vein, *The Time Machine* also demonstrates where political weariness may lead. As noted in the introduction, the right and ability to speak does not necessarily come with the willingness to contribute effectively, and continuously, to political debate. Wells depicts, in accordance with the Platonic dialogues, a symbolic scenario that may occur when human beings fail to, or even refuse to, evaluate what is right in front of them, but listen only to their appetites. In this vein, he also portrays, in accordance with More's *Utopia*, what might happen when reason is no longer available to represent justice and teach citizens virtue and social excellence (cf. p. 17). Human beings will swap their status of eloquent political thinkers to that of inarticulate cave-dwelling beings (which is exemplified by the Morlock's habitat in the underground).

It is clear that *The Time Machine* paints a very dark picture of the potential consequences that might arise when human beings fail to tend to reason and learn concepts of political virtue, however, it does help us to make sense of patterns of political change and

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<sup>376</sup> Hitz 2010: 113.

debate. In conjunction with the Promethean cycles of ascent and descent, and the fate of the Atlanteans, it underlines a point already made clear in the *Statesman*. Specifically, it portrays the importance of having a true political expert who does not forget the lessons from the previous periods but who is able to learn from them, rather than swapping one cycle for the next. At the same time, despite the complications that may come with them, it also shows that it is necessary to have political discussions among different factions, because it keeps the human mind alive. It thus portrays the potential consequences of *Utopia* and the dangers that come with the lack of individual idiosyncrasy and freedom of speech.

If the citizens do not learn, then one day they may have to face more serious problems than just deceptive speech, unjust laws, and reasoning that is, at times, inadequate. For there may come a day where the cycles collapse, which would subsequently result in the decline of speech and intellect, and humans' ability to secure their existence as political animals. Instead, they would become one with the brutes.

## CHAPTER 2

### Rhetorical Strategies and State Formation in Aristophanes and Orwell

#### I. Aristophanes' *Birds*: The Role of Tereus

This chapter illuminates in more detail the significance of the human ability to secure their existence as political animals by the means of speech and intellect, and it looks at the differences between human beings and animals when it comes to concepts of speech, political thinking, and founding of cities. Precisely, the story of *Birds* offers an answer to the question, 'what makes human beings human?' which not only highlights the development of political and legal thought, the reliance on rhetoric, and the themes of change and oscillation analysed in the previous chapter, but also the fifth-century fascination with city-planning and other ways of organising society. I contextualize *Birds* against other relevant sources that examine fifth-fourth centuries rhetoric (Isocrates, Lysias), animal rationality and political theory (Aristotle, Plutarch), and modern political animals (Orwell) who correspond elegantly with some of the key dimensions found in the ancient accounts.

It is clear that Aristophanes' comedies are packed with animals that are employed in numerous ways.<sup>377</sup> However, for this chapter, the following point is the most important one:

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<sup>377</sup> *Birds*, along with *Frogs* and *Wasps*, employs animals to symbolize human characteristics by playing with the categories of human and animal with comic verve and by approaching the borderlines of the two. In contrast, as Pütz also notes, are the comedies that are concerned with the consequences of the Peloponnesian War for Athens such as *Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Lysistrata*, *Ecclesiazusae*, and *Wealth*. (See Pütz 2015: 62). In these comedies, animals appear predominantly as food rather than as the inhabitants of a place away from Athens (*Birds*), or as chorus members (*Frogs* and *Wasps*). For instance, *Ach.* 1005-117 depicts Dicaeopolis' dinner preparations, and *Peace* 1149-51, 1195-6, and 1312 describe the preparations for Trygaeus' wedding feast. In *Knights* 354-72, we witness a bragging contest between

the representation of Peisetaerus and Euelpides as non-humans provides a figure within which the blurred boundaries of humans and animals can be explored. Moreover, the gap between humans and animals, and the unyielding difference in hierarchy between them, can be more easily examined if it is expressed through a character that portrays both. *Birds* fulfils these conditions and thus provides the ideal textual space within which this examination can take place. This, in turn, can help us answer the question posed at the end of the previous chapter ('what makes human beings human?'), and understand more clearly the implications of the time traveller's observations in the future. Romer writes, "*Birds* is a politically engaged play, and the question of what it means to be Athenian is explored more broadly in the Hesiodic terms of what it means to be human."<sup>378</sup>

More importantly, *Birds* (and, as I demonstrate towards the end of this chapter, *Animal Farm* as well) features a cyclical imagery and a 'return to origins'<sup>379</sup> that resembles not only the paradoxical interpretation of tyranny seen in *Utopia*, where More frees his citizens from one system only to enslave them in another, but also the ring compositions of the *Prometheia* and the *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias*. Like the trilogy and the Platonic dialogues, the comedy presents elements of recurrent political cycles by presenting birds that attempt to reclaim kingship and characters who leave Athens only to find themselves in a city very much

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Paphlagon-Cleon and the Sausage-Seller about what, and how much, they can eat and *Knights* 645-62, 929, 934, 1177-99 portray a contest to provide Demus with food.

In addition to being employed as chorus-members, media to illuminate differences between humans and animals in an entertaining manner, or as delicious food, animals also appear in various other situations. They turn up in sacrifice-settings (*Peace* 929-38, *Lys.* 192 and 202, and *Wealth* 138 and 820), insults (*Ach.* 907, *Eccl.* 1072), proverbs (*Peace*), sexual comparisons (*Lys.* 618-0, 723-4), oracles (*Lys.* 770-6, *Knights* 132, 138, 1013-22, 1037-44), curses (*Wealth* 604), terms of endearment (*Wealth* 1011), as monsters (*Frogs* 288-92), and in mythological allusions (*Birds*, *Frogs*, and *Wealth*). See Pütz 2015: 62. See also Olson 1998; Sommerstein 1990; Sommerstein 2001; Austin & Olson 2004.

<sup>378</sup> Romer 1997: 53-54.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Romer 1997: 51.

reminiscent of Athens at the end of the play.<sup>380</sup> Like More, who dismantles the problematic government of his time only to re-assemble it in a different form on a strange island, Aristophanes takes apart the Athenian political system in *Birds*, only to put it back together in the sky.

This echoes the recurring movement of the cosmos discussed in the previous chapter (cf. p. 113): ‘everything returns to what it was before, and what has been will be again,’ and it joins one of its fundamental themes, namely that the past is inevitably contained in the future. In this vein, *Utopia*, in conjunction with *Animal Farm* and *Birds*, also continues to express part of the Greek legacy to western culture and literature and its significant position in the realm of authors whose works offer an imaginative interplay of topical allusions and fantastic elements.

Let us start at the beginning of the story, that is, with Tereus, for he has lived amongst the birds longer than Peisetaerus and Euelpides have. Tereus is a useful character to discuss here, because his behaviour weaves together the various elements of the play. I suggest that his meta-theatrical presence (in that he represents aspects from both *Tereus* and *Birds* at the same time) and Promethean-like demeanour (in that he gives language to the birds and starts their civil evolution) serve as a paramount representation of what it is like to have speech but to lack certain attributes that should come with that possession (such as debate). In this vein, the subsequent section (pp. 143-157) also sheds further light on some of the phenomena Wells’ time-traveller comes across in the future, such as the civil de-evolution and the unfortunate implications of the inability to engage in political discourse even though rudimentary speech still exists.

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<sup>380</sup> See the scholia (vol 1. p. 423) on this: “[Aristophanes] gets rid of the earth but not of its associations. In his discontentment with the like things in Athens, he represents the birds as deliberating and meeting together.”

The audience already knows Tereus from myth and, more particularly, from Sophocles' lost tragedy *Tereus*. Aristophanes' Tereus is, in fact, Sophocles' Tereus some years later.<sup>381</sup> His wrongdoings from the past are forgotten (or at least not directly addressed in the comedy), and he is a respected member of the realm of the birds where he lives contentedly with his wife Prokne.<sup>382</sup> He still occasionally refers to his past life and complains about Sophocles' unfair treatment of him, i.e. having made him become a bird. He says: *τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαισιν ἐμὲ τὸν Τηρέα*. "It's how Sophocles distorts Tereus – that's me – in his tragedies."<sup>383</sup> The recourse to *Tereus* in the following passages is fruitful, because it shows how *Birds* is a contrafact of the tragedy, an Aristophanic antic that expresses its tragic heritage through a reversal of the situation at hand which concentrates on the possession of language. However, even without actively resorting to *Tereus*, the argument presented below works because the comedy marks its relation to the tragedy on its very own, by presenting a linguistic juxtaposition of Athenians and barbarians (cf. p. 157).

The relation to the tragedy is evident despite the fact that virtually all features of Tereus' violent background story (the rape of Philomela, the glossectomy, and the sacrifice of Itys) are absent from the comic stage (his complaints notwithstanding). The only passage that mentions Itys' killing is found at lines 211-2, where Tereus says that he and Prokne still lament Itys' death: *οὐς διὰ θείου στόματος θρηνεῖς τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σὸν πολύδακρον Ἴτυν*.

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<sup>381</sup> See, for instance, Hofmann 1976: 73, Griffith 1987: 60 and Dobrov 1993: 215. More generally, see Alink 1983, Zannini-Quirini 1987 and Dunbar 1997. For the Tereus myth and other myths that feature 'men in bird form', see Pollard 1977: 162-171. For an overview of the hoopoe in Greek thought, see Thompson 1895: 54-57, and especially p. 57 for the hoopoe in Aristophanes. On the mythology of the hoopoe in general, see Oder 1888.

<sup>382</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 1453a36-39.

<sup>383</sup> *Birds*, 100-101.

(“...Lament once more through lips divine for Itys, your dead child and mine”).<sup>384</sup> Instead the focus is on something else, because in *Birds*, Tereus’ main purpose is to have taught Greek to the birds to create a linguistic setting for Peisetaerus’ and Euelpides’ later activities. Specifically, he has two purposes: (1) he gives language to the birds, so they are no longer ‘barbarian’, and (2) he serves as a catalyst who starts the process of civilizing the birds until Peisetaerus and Euelpides come by to move it along. In fact, it is his catalytic role, as Dobrov notes likewise, that connects the various themes of the comedy.<sup>385</sup>

Let us begin at (1) and explore Tereus’ role as a Greek teacher, because Aristophanes’ ideas to have a barbarian teach Greek to other barbarians is significant. At 199-200, Tereus exclaims: ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτοὺς βαρβάρους ὄντας πρὸ τοῦ ἐδίδαξα τὴν φωνὴν ξυνὼν πολὺν χρόνον. “[The birds] used to be inarticulate, but I’ve lived with them a long time and I’ve taught them language.” Tereus teaches Greek to the birds as a clever and, at least initially, benevolent barbarian, which is different from his role in *Tereus* where he appears as brutal and unsophisticated, two characteristics that accentuate his barbarian status. There, he performs the glossectomy on Philomela in order to strip her of her Greek voice but is seemingly

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<sup>384</sup> McCartney 1920: 267 notes, that Tereus’ exclamation of Ἴτυν “is not without parallel [because] the notion that birds lament old human sorrows is quite common.” He recounts an African bird story from Andrew Lang, which says “from one end of Africa to another the honey-bird, *schneter*, is said to be an old woman whose son was lost, and who pursued him till she was turned into a bird, which still shrieks his name, ‘Schneter! Schneter!’” See also Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* 1.27, where Daphnis tells Chloe the story about a girl who prayed to the gods to become a bird after the loss of eight cows to her herd. For other examples of humans having turned into birds after the loss of a loved one, see McCartney 1920: 267-8.

Similarly, Pausanias i.41.9 asserts, “[Prokne’s and Philomela’s] reported metamorphosis into a nightingale and a swallow is due, I think, to the fact that the note of these birds is plaintive and like a lamentation.” This informs the portrayal of Prokne in *Birds*, where she does not have a speaking role, but is only referred to as still lamenting the loss of her son. See Euripides, *Hecuba* 337 for another example, when Hecuba instructs Polyxena to sing sorrowful notes like the nightingale in order to move Odysseus to feel pity for her. Cf. McCartney 1920: 277 on the note, ‘when Greek literature dawns, the nightingale already has a well-established reputation as a grief-stricken bird.’

<sup>385</sup> Dobrov 1993: 216.

unaware that loss of speech does not equate with loss of communication.<sup>386</sup> This reflects the fact that Tereus is from a less civilized society at the same time as it reveals Philomela's superior level of civilization. Her capability to communicate with her sister through inanimate materials (when she weaves her story into a tapestry) makes this clear. Thus, the Thracian's attempt to suppress communication by violent mutilation is 'defeated' by the cunning of two Athenian women.<sup>387</sup>

In *Tereus*, we are therefore presented with a case that is opposite to the one we experience in *Birds*. In the tragedy, Tereus takes speech away; in the comedy, he disseminates it. Dobrov writes:<sup>388</sup>

The reversal of Sophokles' *Tereus* is complete: in the tragedy the Atheno-Thracian antithesis provides the context for Tereus' efforts to suppress communication by means of the incarceration and 'lingual castration' of Philomela [...] Aristophanes makes his Tereus a benevolent teacher and disseminator of language, and not any language, at that, but Greek!

To Dobrov, it seems clear that beyond his transformation from man to bird, Tereus has also undergone a metamorphosis from an unkind into a benevolent character.<sup>389</sup> However, as I demonstrate below, there is more to be said about this subversion of theme from *Tereus*, because the tragedy actually continues to inform the comedy. In particular, it highlights an

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<sup>386</sup> Cf. Gera 2003: 204. This recalls the behaviour of the Eloi seen in chapter 1 (cf. p. 135). Their language has been reduced to nouns and verbs, but they are still able to communicate with one another in rudimentary manners.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. Gera 2003: 204. See Torrance 2010: 218, who notes that the voice "through which the mute Philomela revealed to her sister the awful truth of her rape and glottectomy by her Thracian brother-in law, included a written message. The problem remains, however, that the woven image would work powerfully as a communication without a written message (cf. Helen's weaving of the Trojan war in *Iliad* 3). Perhaps the names 'Tereus' and 'Philomela' featured in the tapestry as names often do on vase paintings, and were read aloud by Procne as she recognized her sister." See also Dobrov 1993: 204, who asserts that it is "clear that Philomela's weaving involved a *written* message, a feature invented by Sophokles for his dramatic purposes."

<sup>388</sup> Dobrov 1993: 225-6.

<sup>389</sup> Cf. Dobrov 1993: 190.

essential aspect of the comedy when it becomes clear that the birds' Greek is not sufficient in order for them to engage intelligently in political debate.

It is clear that Tereus civilizes the birds when he teaches them Greek, which in turn sets in motion the creation of νεφελοκοκκυγία. Dobrov remarks: "Tereus' activities of disseminating language are catalytic for this metacomedy, allowing Peisetairos' political career to mirror, among other things, the improvisational creativity of a comic poet."<sup>390</sup> I agree with Dobrov, but I take his argument further and assert that Tereus' language lessons also present us with an unwritten prologue that alludes to the time that is yet to come (i.e. the time during which the story of *Birds* will take place). Tereus' distribution of Greek not only enables the arrival of Peisetaerus and Euelpides and the founding of νεφελοκοκκυγία, but also serves as the initial clash between (former) human and birds, which sets in motion further clashes, which then take place on a rhetorical level. Consequently, Tereus' lessons amount to a display not only of the birds' forthcoming civil evolution but also of the trademarks that inevitably come with it, such as debate (or, lack thereof), city building, and law-making.<sup>391</sup>

This unwritten prologue and Tereus' dissemination of Greek amongst the birds can be connected to Prometheus, particularly to his claim in *PV* to have distributed wisdom and speech amongst mankind, which in turn triggered their ascent and development as political beings. Dunbar asserts the wording Tereus uses when he describes his dissemination of language, ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτοὺς βαρβάρους ὄντας πρὸ τοῦ ἐδίδαξα τὴν φωνήν, ξυνῶν πολλὸν χρόνον ("Look, I've lived with them a long time, and they're not the barbarians they were before I

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<sup>390</sup> Dobrov 1993: 226.

<sup>391</sup> The evolutionary aspect is highlighted by the fact that in *Birds*, being (or, becoming) a bird is seen as an ascent. The reverse hierarchical system (man-god-bird), the Athenians' transformation into birds, the gods' descent (i.e. the loss of rulership), and the birds' ascent (the return to rulership) comically echoes the notions of ascent and descent present in *PV*.

Cf. the metempsychosis in *Tim.* 91a, where flawed men are transformed into women, and *Tim.* 91e-d, where 'light-minded' (κοῦφος) men descend into birds and other animals.

taught them language”), may have been influenced by Prometheus’ claim at *PV* 443-5.<sup>392</sup> There, he says, ὡς σφας νηπίους ὄντας τὸ πρὶν // ἔννοους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους. “How infantile they were before I made them intelligent and possessed of understanding.” The birds were uncivilized and inarticulate before Tereus’ Greek lessons, just like mankind was witless and devoid of reason before Prometheus’ gifts of civilization.

Griffith asserts that these two lines serve as an introduction to the subsequent lines, which amount “virtually to a display speech (ἐπίδειξις) on man’s cultural evolution (450-506n.).”<sup>393</sup> Prometheus enables man to undergo a transformation from an uncultured being to a political thinker who knows the art of rhetoric; and Tereus guides the birds away from their barbarian lifestyle by teaching them the Greek language (however, as it turns out, the birds do not know the art of rhetoric). I do not wish to assert that Tereus appears as a true second Prometheus here (as stated earlier, in the end Peisetaerus and Euelpides are the ones who really move along the founding of the bird city). However, I do agree with Dunbar that there are important connections to be made between the wording in *PV* 443-4 and *Birds* 199-200, especially because of the catalytic nature of both.

Additionally, in the Aristophanic text, Prometheus stays true to his tragic form in that he loathes the gods, but is fond of man: ἀεὶ ποτ’ ἀνθρώποις γὰρ εὔνοους εἶμι’ ἐγὼ...μισῶ δ’ ἅπαντας τοὺς θεούς, ὡς οἶσθα σύ. “I have always been friendly to human beings...and I hate all the gods, as you know.”<sup>394</sup> Herington points out that this scene shows that both *Birds* and

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<sup>392</sup> *Birds* 199-200. See Dunbar 1997: 200. “βαρβάρους: i.e. speaking an unintelligible tongue; the Greeks disdainfully compared foreigners speaking their own languages to birds, especially swallows, twittering.” Cf. Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1050-1.

<sup>393</sup> Griffith 1983: 164.

<sup>394</sup> *Birds*, 1545-7. Cf. *PV* 975-6, ἀπλῶ λόγῳ τοὺς πάντας ἐχθαίρω θεούς, ὅσοι παθόντες εἴ κακοῦσί μ’ ἐκδίκως. (“Quite simply, I hate all the gods who are so unjustly harming me after I helped them”).

*PV* alike “hinge on the idea of a revolt against the divine establishment.”<sup>395</sup> Indeed, it is Prometheus’ character in *Birds* who directs the negotiations that lead to Zeus’ eventual dethronement when he orders Zeus’ sceptre to be handed over to the birds. He tells Peisetaerus: ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ σπένδεσθ’, ἐὰν μὴ παραδιδῶ τὸ σκῆπτρον ὁ Ζεὺς τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν πάλιν, καὶ τὴν Βασιλείαν σοι γυναῖκ’ ἔχειν διδῶ. “But don’t you ratify a treaty unless Zeus returns his sceptre to the birds and gives you Princess for your bride.”<sup>396</sup>

Herington notes that this command echoes the prophecy shouted by Prometheus in *PV* 168-172, ἧ μὴν ἔτ’ ἐμοῦ, καίπερ κρατεραῖς ἐν γυιοπέδαις αἰκίζομένου, χρεῖαν ἔξει μακάρων πρύτανις, δεῖξαι τὸ νέον βούλευμ’ ὑφ’ ὅτου σκῆπτρον τιμὰς τ’ ἀποσυλᾶται. “I tell you that even though my limbs are held in these strong, degrading fetters, the president of the immortals will yet have need of me, to reveal the new plan by which he can be robbed of his sceptre and his privileges.”<sup>397</sup> The imagery of the ephemeral tyranny of Zeus and the inevitability of change that shines through *PV*, as discussed earlier on pp. 55-8, then satirically re-emerges in *Birds*, which provides the theme for the climax of the comedy when the sceptre is indeed handed over to the birds.

Nevertheless, even though Tereus civilizes the birds by teaching them Greek and Prometheus tells them that it is possible to reclaim leadership, over the course of the comedy it becomes clear that their Greek and political leadership skills are largely ineffective. They may have the theoretical language skills (and they may have re-claimed leadership in theory),

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<sup>395</sup> Herington 1963b: 237. This brings to mind the point made in chapter 1 in regards to Zeus’ rule, namely that it is possible to (re-) claim leadership and that already established regimes and laws do not necessarily stay established forever. Cf. pp. 69-71.

<sup>396</sup> *Birds*, 1535-6. The use of the word πάλιν underlines both the point made above as well as the recurrent imagery analysed in *PV*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias*. Echoing the ascending and descending sequences in the tragedy and the Platonic dialogues, this line in the comedy makes clear that previously overthrown regimes can rise again and current regimes can fall. It is clear that in both plays, Zeus and Prometheus are the two characters who inform that notion.

<sup>397</sup> Herington 1963b: 239.

but they have been given no sophistication to use them properly. To some extent this is due to them being animals; they are, as stated above, barbarians and thus not cut out to speak Greek properly. Furthermore, there is something to be said about the comic element that arises when a barbarian teaches Greek to other barbarians, for an overly ambitious undertaking like this is, arguably, bound to fail from the very beginning.<sup>398</sup>

However, I argue that it is also possible to look at it another way, and this is where the relation of *Birds* to *Tereus* becomes especially clear. Tereus, it appears, serves as an agent of speech once again, as he decides who has the right to speak, whether effectively or ineffectively, and who does not. By linking the Aristophanic Tereus to the Sophoclean one, we can thus create a window into the gap between the right to speak and the right to be heard, and we are reminded of the fact that these two rights do not necessarily entail one another. This becomes particularly evident when looking at the ostensible differences between the two portrayals of Tereus. It is true that, at first glance, we witness a reversal of roles when we watch Tereus transform from a language-taker into a language-giver. Yet, upon closer inspection the two cases that we are presented with in Aristophanes and Sophocles are more alike than previously assumed, because in both stories speech is being manipulated. (This also demonstrates that, for Tereus too, the past is contained in the future).

This, in turn, shows an important feature of νεφελοκοκκυγία: the city in the sky is a city of language and its citizens, the birds, show what it is like to be given speech but no agency, or motivation, to use it. Indeed, this is the point that is being argued here: the birds may lack motivation because they are ‘bird-brained,’<sup>399</sup> but, more importantly they demonstrate what it is like to have speech but to lack lasting deliberative rhetoric (cf. p. 49).

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<sup>398</sup> Cf. Plutarch *De fac.* 941c and *Quaest. Rom.* 269a, on the notion that Greek language atrophies in a barbarian environment.

<sup>399</sup> Cf. Dunbar 1997: 279. “If the chorus were not bird-brained they would notice that he has not proved that the birds may benefit from listening to anything that their enemy has to say.”

The passages below illuminate the birds' inferior command of the Greek language and their incapability to untangle the hidden meaning behind Peisetaerus' and Tereus' words at the same time as they portray the latter's superior rhetorical skills. It is worth discussing these passages, I think, because they enrich our understanding of the connotations of Plato's polemics against the use of rhetoric in the assembly (cf. pp. 81-2), as they point at the dangerous patterns of political debate and the effects of the deceptions of sight and sound.

Tereus serves once again as the catalyst. Early on in the comedy, he tells the birds to go to the meeting that Peisetaerus and Euelpides have scheduled in order to announce the good news (i.e. their intention to find νεφελοκοκκυγία): δεῦρ' ἴτε πεισόμενοι τὰ νεώτερα, πάντα γὰρ ἐνθάδε φύλ' ἀθροίζομεν...ἀλλ' ἴτ' εἰς λόγους ἅπαντα, δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο. "Come hither to learn the news; for we are assembling here all the tribes...come to the meeting, all of you, hither, hither, hither, hither!"<sup>400</sup> Tereus makes clear that the news the birds are about to hear will change their lives for the better: κοινόν, ἀσφαλῆ, δίκαιον, ἡδύν, ὠφελήσιμον. "News that concerns you all: something safe, honest, pleasurable and to your advantage."<sup>401</sup> The chorus-leader is suspicious at first and wonders whether there is an ulterior motive for this. ὀρᾷ τι κέρδος ἐνθάδ' ἄξιον μονῆς, ὅτῳ πέποιθ' ἔμοι ξυνῶν κρατεῖν ἂν ἢ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἢ φίλοισιν ὠφελεῖν ἔχειν; "Does [Peisetaerus] see any worth-while gain in staying here, which gives him confidence that by living with me he may be able either to overcome his enemy or to help his friends?"<sup>402</sup>

However, the birds' suspicions are quickly erased by Tereus' eloquent words. λέγει μέγαν τιν' ὄλβον, οὔτε λεκτὸν οὔτε πιστόν: ὡς σὰ πάντα καὶ τὸ τῆδε καὶ τὸ κεῖσε καὶ τὸ

<sup>400</sup> *Birds*, 252-3; 258-9. Tereus' use of ἀθροίζομεν underlines a point that I will make later on, namely that, animals can, and do, have assemblies.

<sup>401</sup> *Birds*, 316.

<sup>402</sup> *Birds*, 417-420. Cf. 451-2, δολερὸν μὲν ἀεὶ κατὰ πάντα δὴ τρόπον πέφυκεν ἄνθρωπος. ("A treacherous thing always in every way is human nature").

δεῦρο προσβιβᾶ λέγων. “[Peisetaerus] speaks of great felicity, too great to speak of or to credit; for he will argue, and convince you, that all this expanse is yours, in this direction, and in that, and in this.”<sup>403</sup> Especially, ‘οὔτε λεκτὸν οὔτε πιστόν’ hints at the questionable nature of Peisetaerus as politician since Tereus does not actually tell the birds why they should choose him as leader.<sup>404</sup> Likewise, ‘προσβιβᾶ λέγων’ suggests that it has already been decided that Peisetaerus will argue his case, and that he will be successful in doing so. The fact that προσβιβᾶ is in the future tense makes this all the more telling, because it shows that the birds’ fate has been sealed before they have even agreed to let Peisetaerus speak.

Tereus continues by saying that Peisetaerus is ‘incredibly clever’ (ἄφατον ὡς φρόνιμος) and the ‘smartest of foxes’ (πυκνότατον κίναδος), who ‘succeeds in everything’ (κῦρμα) and, more importantly, ‘who is experienced in the things of the mind’ (τρίμμα).<sup>405</sup> Here, the use of ‘πυκνότατον κίναδος’ in reference to Peisetaerus clearly does not exclusively refer to his allegedly marvellous leadership skills, but also to his shrewd scheme, which will ultimately be fatal to the birds. The choice to use κῦρμα and τρίμμα in the next line emphasises this even more, especially in combination with the etymology of Peisetaerus’ name, because it shows that he knows how to stimulate someone’s mind successfully, and that he has done it before. (In this way, ἦθος τοῦ λέγοντος and perhaps even ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων, are also applicable).<sup>406</sup>

Nonetheless, (staying true to the optimistic nature of Aristophanic comedy), the birds are elated at the prospects of Peisetaerus’ government, which is why the chorus leader tells Tereus: λέγειν λέγειν κέλευέ μοι. κλύων γὰρ ὧν σύ μοι λέγεις λόγων ἀνεπτέρωμαι. “Tell him

<sup>403</sup> *Birds*, 421-5.

<sup>404</sup> Tereus’ phrasing here is comparable with that of Praxagora who, as I will show later, advertises the leadership of the women in a similar way: μηδὲ πυνθανώμεθα τί ποτ’ ἄρα δρᾶν μέλλουσιν, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶ τρόπῳ ἐῶμεν ἄρχειν. *Eccl.* 229-232.

<sup>405</sup> *Birds*, 427-430. Cf. *Clouds*, λέγειν γενήσει τρίμμα κρόταλον παιπάλῃ.

<sup>406</sup> On the etymology of his name, (‘to persuade’), see also Kanavou 2011: 106-7.

to speak, to speak, I beg you! On hearing the words you've spoken to me my heart has taken wing!"<sup>407</sup> Especially, 'ἀναπτερώ' shows how eager the chorus leader is to hear Peisetaerus' plan, which is later emphasized by the chorus in line 629: ἐπαυχήσας δὲ τοῖσι σοῖς λόγοις.<sup>408</sup>

Tereus' persuasion techniques, then, allow Peisetaerus to address the birds, which he does largely by referring to their supposedly lost status as kings (οἵτινες ὄντες πρότερον βασιλῆς), and by instructing them to reclaim their rulership from Zeus (τὴν ἀρχὴν τὸν Δί' ἀπαιτεῖν).<sup>409</sup> He employs a form of rhetoric that installs anger in the birds and a desire to take revenge and, by doing so, anachronistically echoes Aristotle's definition of anger in the *Art of Rhetoric*.<sup>410</sup> The chorus, reduced to tears (ἐδάκρυσά) because they have found out what the birds once had, declare Peisetaerus their god-sent saviour and entrust themselves to him (σὺ δέ μοι κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ τινα συντυχίαν ἀγαθὴν ἤκεις ἐμοὶ σωτήρ).<sup>411</sup>

Additionally, Peisetaerus is able to persuade the gods (and his success in doing so demonstrates the brilliance of his rhetorical technique, because his persuasion skills convince animals and gods alike to accept his proposal). At 1606-1621, he tells Poseidon that the

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<sup>407</sup> *Birds*, 431-433. See also lines 371-385 for more examples. For instance, at line 385, the Chorus Leader says to Tereus, ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἄλλο σοί πω πρᾶγμα' ἐνηντιώμεθα. ("Well, we've surely never opposed you in any past dealings").

<sup>408</sup> Cf. Aeschylus, *Lib.* 229, where Electra's excitement, after recognising Orestes' footprints, is described in the same way: ἀνεπτερώθης κάδοκεις ὄρᾶν ἐμέ.

<sup>409</sup> *Birds* 468 and 554.

<sup>410</sup> See especially II.ii.2, ἔστω δὴ ὀργὴ ὄρεξις μετὰ λύπης τιμωρίας φαινομένης διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ τι τῶν αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ὀλιγωρεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος. ("Let us then define anger as a longing [i.e. the longing for kingship in the birds' case], accompanied by pain [lack of sacrifices], for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight [the loss of the scepter and suffering from indignities], affecting a man himself or one of his friends, when such a slight is undeserved"). Aristotle continues, διατρίβουσιν ἐ τῷ τιμωρεῖσθαι τῇ διανοίᾳ. ἢ οὖν τότε γινομένη φαντασία ἡδονὴν ἐμποιεῖ, ὥσπερ ἢ τῶν ἐνυπνίων. ("Men dwell upon the thought of revenge, and the vision that rises before us produces the same pleasure as one seen in dreams").

This not only connects with Tereus' rhetoric but also with Peisetaerus' suggestion in line 557 that, in case the gods do not oblige, the birds should declare a holy war (ἱερὸν πόλεμον) against them. On the use of ἱερὸν πόλεμον, see the scholia 556.

<sup>411</sup> *Birds* 540-7.

Olympian gods will be even more powerful (μεῖζον ἰσχύσεται) than they are already once the birds are in charge. He promises him that men will no longer be able to get away with false oaths once the gods have the birds as their allies, because then men will have to swear by both the birds and the gods. In case they break their oaths, the birds can fly down and pick their eyes out. Furthermore, at 1671-3, Peisetaerus promises Heracles kingship and an abundance of milk and honey, if he accepts the conditions of the birds (καταστήσας σ' ἐγὼ τύραννον ὀρνίθων παρέξω σοι γάλα). These false promises can be compared to the tempting promises any orator is able to make in the assembly off stage, and they lay the groundwork for what will later become the political ideals of νεφελοκοκκυγία.

Therefore, both Tereus and Peisetaerus are aware of the relationship between speech and reason, and of the things to which it can lead by employing it skilfully.<sup>412</sup> This is what makes the construction of νεφελοκοκκυγία possible, and thus the creation of civilization. Both Peisetaerus' and Tereus' use of rhetoric in these passages reflect their strong oratorical skills, as they manipulate the language of the birds and the gods with ease by addressing them in a manner which appeals to them. In Tereus' case, this recalls the point made in the section on the *Statesman* (cf. p. 91), namely that he is able to convince the birds by alluding to the benefits Peisetaerus will bring to their environment. He knows, as argued previously, that in order to persuade them, he not only needs to address them with a language with which they are familiar, such as the one that relates to their land, but also with words that emphasise Peisetaerus' arguable strengths. This continues to show that, even though Tereus has escaped

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<sup>412</sup> Like Praxagora who manages to address the Athenians in a way to which they can relate (I will analyse this in the next chapter), Peisetaerus is able to trick the gods into believing him by constructing a narrative of belonging. He appeals to their already existing power and promises them that they will be even more powerful once he and the birds are in charge. (See also Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1337 and his description of *ethos*, a rhetorical device which Peisetaerus and Praxagora employ equally well).

the tragic stage and entered the comic one, he still possesses certain tragic elements that influence the comedy.

This in turn suggests that *Tereus* does not only serve as a model for the manipulation of speech in *Birds*, but also as a sketch for the tyrannical and deceptive nature and political design of νεφελοκοκκυγία. This is further underlined by the idea that Tereus also seems to be driven by desire, which is, to a certain extent, the reason why he manipulates the birds in the first place. Holmes argues:<sup>413</sup>

Aristophanes depicts a comic Tereus who shows from the beginning latent tyrannical and, in particular, erotic qualities that Peisetaurus exploits and who thus provides the bridge for erotic human beings to establish an imperial, aerial polis among the contentedly self-sufficient birds.

Sophocles' *Tereus* serves as the model for this imperial polis, a polis that, even before it has been officially founded, exploits the birds by addressing them with charming, but ultimately deceptive, rhetoric.<sup>414</sup> At the same time, Tereus is addressed with rhetoric that is equally deceptive, as Peisetaerus uses Tereus' gullibility to his advantage; indeed it is clear that it is Tereus' desire that ultimately enables him to build νεφελοκοκκυγία since he has to convince him first before he can persuade the birds.<sup>415</sup> Peisetaerus does this by promising Tereus a powerful position in the bird-society: ὥστ' ἄρξετ' ἀνθρώπων μὲν ὥσπερ παρνόπων, τοὺς δ' αὖ θεοὺς ἀπολεῖτε λιμῶ Μηλίῳ. ("And then you'll rule over humans as you do over

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<sup>413</sup> Holmes 2011: 1. Cf. Reckford 1987: 342. "In part Aristophanes' [*Birds*] reveals the madness of imperial Athens; or better, it reveals the underlying Athenian and human wish for nothing less than everything. We recognize much of the delusion, the passion, even the lunacy of Athens beneath the conduct of the birds under Peisetaerus' leadership and manipulation."

<sup>414</sup> This brings to mind the point the historical Gorgias makes in *Helen* 14, namely that rhetoric has the power to bewitch and beguile the soul.

<sup>415</sup> See also DeLuca 2014: 171.

locusts; and as for the gods, you'll destroy them by Melian famine").<sup>416</sup> Furthermore, at 191-3, he tells him: ἦν μὴ φόρον φέρωσιν ὑμῖν οἱ θεοί, τῶν μηρίων τῆ κνῖσαν οὐ διαφρήσετε. ("You won't let the aroma of the thigh bones pass through unless the gods pay you tribute"). Tereus is delighted to hear these prospects (as he says at line 195, μὴ γὼ νόημα κομψότερον ἤκουσά πω. "I've never heard a more elegant idea"), which in turn leads him to betray the birds and provide a bridge for Peisetaerus to get to them.<sup>417</sup>

In this vein, both the birds and Tereus are blinded by eros, as the language of desire has made its way into their lives.<sup>418</sup> Holmes notes, adding to his argument above, "in *Birds*, eros is a fundamentally and uniquely human (and, anthropomorphically, Olympian) trait that invades the quiet and self-sufficient bird life."<sup>419</sup> In addition to the acquisition of language, the birds have thus also acquired specific human behaviour patterns, such as the tendency to follow what is desirable. (This clearly accentuates the humanization of the birds – something

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<sup>416</sup> *Birds* 185-193. In a way, this is another example of Tereus, the barbarian, being outsmarted by Athenians. In *Tereus*, he is subject to Prokne's and Philomela's cunning revenge; in *Birds*, he falls victim to Peisetaerus' superior rhetorical skills. This is despite the fact that Tereus, in both the comedy and the tragedy, does not speak a barbarian dialect but Attic Greek. See Holmes 2011: 4. More generally, on the absences of dialectical differences in Greek tragedy, see Hall 1989: 117-8.

<sup>417</sup> The betrayal is highlighted further by the fact that Tereus has been transformed into a hoopoe. In *HA VIII*, 633a, Aristotle quotes a passage, which he attributes to Aeschylus, which describes the hoopoe as a shape-shifter who not only changes its colour but also its form depending on the season. Furthermore, the hoopoe is described as a bird, "which presides over its own evils" (τοῦτον δ' ἐπόπτῃν ἔποπα τῶν αὐτοῦ κακῶν), and this clearly recalls Tereus' violent past. The same phrasing also appears in fr. 581 of *Tereus*, τοῦτον δ' ἐπόπτῃν ἔποπα τῶν αὐτοῦ κακῶν, which continues to underline the link between the comic and the tragic Tereus. On a similar note, McCartney 1920: 269 writes, "The large beak of Hoopoe, which has a *facies armata*, is a memorial of the *cuspis* with which as Tereus he pursued Procne and Philomela."

Nonetheless, this is not to say that there is no humour in the first scenes. As Holmes 2011: 3 writes: "...much of the humor of the initial scene is derived from the comic deflation and inversion of the tyrannical and violent figure from the tragedy...[however]...the power of Peisetaerus' words re-awakens Tereus' latent human and tyrannic eros, so manifest in Sophocles' tragedy."

<sup>418</sup> Arrowsmith 1973: 126.

<sup>419</sup> Holmes 2011: 2.

which I will discuss later). Before Peisetaerus and Tereus install fundamentally human traits in them, the birds enjoy a self-sufficient life in nature, which, when we believe Tereus' words, suggests a pastoral-lyric.<sup>420</sup> At lines 57-160, he remarks, οὐκ ἄχαρις ἐς τὴν τριβὴν: οὐ̃ πρῶτα μὲν δεῖ ζῆν ἄνευ βαλλαντίου...νεμόμεσθα δ' ἐν κήποις τὰ λευκὰ σήσαμα καὶ μύρτα καὶ μήκωνα καὶ σισύμβρια. "Not a disagreeable life to spend. Here, in the first place, you have to live without a purse...and we feed in gardens on white sesame, myrtle-berries, poppies and bergamot."<sup>421</sup>

However, swayed by promising rhetoric and eros (the expansion of land) and revolutionary politics (re-claim of leadership), the birds are happy to swap their existing lifestyle for something they believe is better.<sup>422</sup> In this way, it is clear that, even though Tereus does not stay until the end of the comedy, his meta-theatrical presence informs *Birds* in many important respects.<sup>423</sup> He provides a link to the tragedy and, by doing so, offers a model for the match 'Peisetaerus against Birds' (i.e. Athenian against barbarian) that takes place in the theatre. It is a match in which the birds are hopelessly inferior, as they are being

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<sup>420</sup> The term 'proto-pastoral' is probably more accurate here since 'pastoral' has not happened yet, which is why a discussion of it with reference to Aristophanes is technically anachronistic. Yet, such a discourse is not implausible and it is certainly worth pursuing in this context. See Moulton 1981 and Pozzi 1985-86.

<sup>421</sup> See also lines 227-259 and 1088-1101, where Aristophanes provides similar proto-pastoral lyrics.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Ludwig 2002: 12-13. "Eros tends to be reserved for situations in which the agent already has his basic needs met...Indeed eros is often used to describe situations in which the agent gambles more basic goods, risking life or limb in an attempt to obtain a beautiful object of dubious material or practical value... Eros occurs in cases in which the desire, whether sexual or not, becomes obsessional and the subject of desire becomes willing to devote nearly all of his or her life, time, or resources to achieving the goal."

<sup>423</sup> Cf. Dobrov 2001: 126. Dobrov notes that Sophocles' Tereus is refracted through Aristophanes' 'metafictional prism,' which is especially evident when looking at the "definition of 'Athenian' and 'polis' against a barbarian Other," as stated above. He ends his comparison of the two with the words: "In creating his own masterpiece by transforming and distorting a product of Sophocles' dramatic genius, Aristophanes was, quite clearly, honoring his older contemporary with the highest praise." On metatheatre and the intersection of tragedy with comedy, see Dobrov 2001: 1-13.

deceived by Peisetaerus' unsound arguments.<sup>424</sup> The audience is presented with a para-tragedy where tragedy invades comedy, politics enter (bird-) fantasy, humans occupy the realm of animals, and the audience sees humans from the point of view of the birds: as charming but ultimately also as oppressive. The tragic aspect of the play is only accentuated by the fact that Euelpides (the character whose name is based on 'hope') eventually disappears, and Peisetaerus (whose name is based on the word 'persuasion') stays.

At the same time, I maintain that the argument presented here works even without the recourse to *Tereus* (cf. p. 143) because *Birds* portrays its very own crisis of linguistic and social oppositions between different factions. The comic genre's prominence as a way to express rhetorical entertainment and utopian schemes (marked by feelings of superiority and dreams of a Golden Age) enables Aristophanes to flaunt his own tragic element in the play when he juxtaposes the fate of the inarticulate 'Other' with an amusing game of deliberative discourse brought on by clever Athenians. The comic element of this is accentuated by the fact that Aristophanes presents us with a game within a game: Tereus' persuasion techniques are grounded in the nuances of the oratory of persuasion – which is why they work even without resorting to Sophocles, as they are clearly manifest in the comedy (cf. pp. 150-2). Yet, while he concentrates on persuading one faction, another faction is busy persuading him in turn (and this may reflect the notion that even though Tereus speaks good Attic Greek, at the end of the day, he is no Athenian).

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<sup>424</sup> Cf. Dunbar 1997: 316. "Whether Ar. intended Peis. to be...revealed as a 'sophistic' character, blatantly deceiving the simple birds by cunning, unsound arguments, or conceived him simply as a typical Athenian, resourceful, energetic and bold (cf. the famous characterization of the Athenians by the Corinthian envoy in Thuc. 1.70.), and deftly deploying the various means of persuasion available by 414 BC to any Athenian prepared to notice and imitate them, is a difficult question, dependent upon the answer (if there is one) to the wider question of Ar.'s possible intentions in writing *Birds*..."

It may not be possible to determine whether the birds are on the losing end of the game because they are indeed ‘bird-brained,’ or because they have been humanized and are now driven by the lust for power, just like Tereus. However, it is clear that the misuse of rhetoric, and the skillful employment of certain words, play a central role in their fate. They are neither able to see the consequences of Tereus’ words nor, as will become clear later on, those of the legal system Peisetaerus implements in their city. Thus, while chattering away mindlessly, they march right into the trap of νεφελοκοκκυγία.<sup>425</sup>

## II. Νεφελοκοκκυγία as a City of Language

The passages above show that the possession of language and the development of civilization go hand in hand, and that the skilful employment of speech is a prerequisite for building a city.<sup>426</sup> Slater writes, “[Peisetaerus] has been creating citizens for the bird-city by language, and the city is a city of language.”<sup>427</sup> Dobrov notes similarly: “In distinction from the comedies of the 420s in which linguistic play may figure as seasoning, so to speak, the prologue and Great Idea of *Birds* are essentially displays of the creative power of language.”<sup>428</sup>

Surely, this connects with the idea that speech, as well as logical qualities related to speech, is at the core of civilization. Heath asserts:<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> The etymology of νεφελοκοκκυγία accentuates this, too. Specifically, while νεφέλη means ‘cloud’, it can also mean ‘bird net,’ and κόκκυξ may refer to the repeated calls of cuckoos. Cf. *Ach.* 598, ἐχειροτόνησαν με κόκκυγές γε τρεῖς. The scholia assert that the use of κόκκυγές suggests that the vote was ‘uncultivated, that is disorderly. The cuckoo has an unrefined note.’

<sup>426</sup> This continues to highlight the de-evolution witnessed at the end of Wells’ *Time Machine*. As stated there (cf. pp. 135-6), the decline of speech and civilization happens simultaneously.

<sup>427</sup> Slater 2002: 145.

<sup>428</sup> Dobrov: 1997: 100.

<sup>429</sup> Heath 2005: 11.

The success of the polis, the establishment of laws, the rise of justice, the exercise of our humanity—civilization itself—are tied to the use of, and depend upon, speech... This connection becomes commonplace in later rhetoric, where command of language makes civilization possible and thus makes Athens, the *locus classicus* of loquacity, superior to other Greek city-states and Greeks superior to other cultures.

Heath's argument, that it is due to the Athenians' ability to make use of the advantageous aspects of speech that they were able to rise above other cultures, illuminates Peisetaerus' employment of rhetoric in *Birds*. Even though he does not wish to live in Athens anymore, he makes use of a distinct Athenian faculty (i.e. *logos*) and, by doing so, does what many other Athenians have done before him: he founds a city and invents laws. This is one of the first of many indications that it may be possible to take Peisetaerus out of Athens; however, it is not possible to take the Athenian out of him.

By having his character systematically use this natural Athenian aptitude, Aristophanes portrays a kind of thinking that is common in other contemporary texts as well. For example, Isocrates states:<sup>430</sup>

τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοις οἷς ἔχομεν οὐδὲν τῶν ἄλλων ζώων διαφέρομεν, ἀλλὰ πολλῶν καὶ τῷ τάχει καὶ τῇ ῥώμῃ καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις εὐπορίαις καταδεέστεροι τυγχάνομεν ὄντες. ἐγγενομένου δ' ἡμῖν τοῦ πείθειν ἀλλήλους καὶ δηλοῦν πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς περὶ ὧν ἂν βουληθῶμεν, οὐ μόνον τοῦ θηριωδῶς ζῆν ἀπηλλάγημεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ συνελθόντες πόλεις ᾤκισαμεν καὶ νόμους ἐθέμεθα καὶ τέχνας εὗρομεν, καὶ σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ δι' ἡμῶν μεμηχανημένα λόγος ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ὁ συγκατασκευάσας.

For in the other powers which we possess we are in no respect superior to other living creatures; nay, we are inferior to many in swiftness and in strength and in other resources; but, because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish.

Additionally, at *Antid.* 293-4, he writes:<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Isocrates, *Nicoles or the Cyprians* 5-6.

ἀλλὰ τούτοις οἷς περ ἢ φύσις ἢ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἄλλων ζώων, καὶ τὸ γένος τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τῶν βαρβάρων, τῷ καὶ πρὸς τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς λόγους ἄμεινον πεπαιδεῦσθαι τῶν ἄλλων.

...But in those qualities by which the nature of man rises above the other animals, and the race of the Hellenes above the barbarians, namely, in the fact that you have been educated as have been no other people in wisdom and in speech.

Lysias even stresses that it is man's duty to convince by argument rather than by force, as that is an approach reserved for wild beasts:<sup>432</sup>

ἡγησάμενοι θηρίων μὲν ἔργον εἶναι ὑπ' ἀλλήλων βία κρατεῖσθαι, ἀνθρώποις δὲ προσήκειν νόμῳ μὲν ὀρίσαι τὸ δίκαιον, λόγῳ δὲ πείσαι, ἔργῳ δὲ τούτοις ὑπηρετεῖν, ὑπὸ νόμου μὲν βασιλευομένους, ὑπὸ λόγου δὲ διδασκομένους

For they deemed that it was the way of wild beasts to be held subject to one another by force, but the duty of men to delimit justice by law, to convince by reason, and to serve these two in deed by submitting to the sovereignty of law and the instruction of reason.

Lysias' speech is arguably the most 'Athenian' of these passages (since Isocrates seems to point at the weaknesses of the government of his time by associating the good points he attributes to monarchy in *Nicocles* "with the early democracy of Athens"),<sup>433</sup> and Peisetaerus clearly brings to mind his argument in *Birds*, when he convinces Tereus, the birds, and the gods by speech and reason.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Isocrates, *Antid.* 293-4. Cf. Plato, *Apol.* 29d. This readily brings to mind Gorgias' positive opinion on rhetoric, analysed in chapter 1 (cf. pp. 75-6), which suggests that speech enables man to establish anything they wish. See *Gorgias* 452e.

<sup>432</sup> Lysias, *Funeral Oration*, 19. Trans. Lamb, adapted.

<sup>433</sup> Norlin 1928: 75.

<sup>434</sup> This undermines the birds' proposed plan when Peisetaerus and Euelpides first enter their realm, and they are not very pleased to see them. They suggest attacking them (343-351), rather than convincing them by speech to leave, which further shows that they lack the ability (or willingness) to engage in debate.

That being said, 500 years later, Gryllus praises this exact quality (that animals defend themselves by strength of the body rather than by craft and deceit). See *Gryllus* 987c-d.

In this vein, he also epitomises Socrates' critique of rhetoric discussed in chapter 1 (cf. pp. 76-8). He does not truly convey 'what is just and noble, but only what will seem to be so' (οὐδὲ τὰ ὄντως ἀγαθὰ ἢ καλὰ ἀλλ' ὅσα δόξει), and he relies on the fact that 'persuasion comes from what seems to be true, not from the truth' (ἐκ εἶναι τὸ πείθειν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας).<sup>435</sup> Certainly, νεφελοκοκκυγία is based on a foundation of false promises and lies since Peisetaerus promises Tereus, the birds, and the gods a better life but neglects to mention that it is only his life that will improve in the theocratic tyranny he is about to establish.<sup>436</sup> Utilizing Gorgianic rhetoric, Peisetaerus charms them and, by doing so, portrays one of Socrates' key reasons for holding rhetoric in contempt: it is a branch of flattery and thus a disgrace.<sup>437</sup> Tereus, the birds, and the gods are all swayed, and they do not realise that what Peisetaerus is saying does not truly reflect the future he has actually planned for them.<sup>438</sup>

### III. The metamorphoses in *Birds*

The rhetorical elements that inform Peisetaerus' character also suggest that, despite the fact that he has become a bird and is far away from Athens, he still possesses all sorts of

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<sup>435</sup> *Phaedrus* 260a. Cf. *Gorgias* 452, *Philebus* 58a-b, and *Encomium of Helen* DK 82 B11.

<sup>436</sup> This brings to mind *Rep.* 566d-e, when Socrates and Glaucon describe the nature of the tyrant. ἄρ' οὖν, εἶπον, οὐ ταῖς μὲν πρώταις ἡμέραις τε καὶ χρόνῳ προσγεῶν τε καὶ ἀσπάζεται πάντα, ᾧ ἂν περιτυγχάνῃ, καὶ οὔτε τύραννός φησιν εἶναι ὑπισχνεῖται τε πολλὰ καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ, χρεῶν τε ἡλευθέρωσε καὶ γῆν διένειμε δήμῳ τε καὶ τοῖς περὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ πᾶσιν ἰλεῶς τε καὶ πρᾶος εἶναι προσποιεῖται; ὅταν δέ γε οἶμαι πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω ἐχθροὺς τοῖς μὲν καταλλαγῆ, τοὺς δὲ καὶ διαφθείρῃ, καὶ ἡσυχία ἐκείνων γένηται, πρῶτον μὲν πολέμους τινὰς ἀεὶ κινεῖ.

(“Then at the start and in the first days does he not smile upon all men and greet everybody he meets and deny that he is a tyrant, and promise many things in private and public, and having freed men from debts, and distributed lands to the people and his own associates, he affects a gracious and gentle manner to all? ...but when, I suppose, he has come to terms with some of his exiled enemies and has got others destroyed and is no longer disturbed by them, in the first place he is always stirring up some war...”)

<sup>437</sup> *Gorg.* 465a.

<sup>438</sup> This in turn recalls the importance of measurement discussed in the section on the *Protagoras* (cf. pp. 107-109). In this case, both the birds and the gods fail to measure Tereus' and Peisetaerus' words.

human attributes. Neither he nor Euelpides can let go of their humanness. They act like men, speak like men (although at 1199 and 1510, Peisetaerus' Greek does sound a little like bird-chirping, ποῖ ποῖ ποῖ and ἰοὺ ἰοῦ),<sup>439</sup> and they think like political men. Konstan writes: "Pisthetaerus...perhaps, represents the kind of ambitious individualism associated with a sophistic conception of human nature, which takes advantage of the weakness of credulousness of simpler creatures."<sup>440</sup> Romer notes similarly: "[in νεφελοκοκκυγία] human nature (albeit in a very Athenian way) run[s] its natural course."<sup>441</sup> Moreover, Romer continues, "[Aristophanes reaffirms] the idea that human life is somehow cyclical, that, however much things change, they return to something very like their original condition, that the new is old."<sup>442</sup>

The metamorphosis is thus incomplete because human nature has not been transformed. This shows that the idea of a metamorphosis into true birdhood is nothing but a comic fantasy in the play.<sup>443</sup> This becomes also clear when looking at the ways in which they mock each other after their transformation. Peisetaerus makes fun of Euelpides' wings and tells him he looks like a cheap imitation of a goose, and Euelpides responds by saying that Peisetaerus looks like a close-shaven blackbird.<sup>444</sup> Not only does this highlight the comic effect of the entire situation, but it also shows once again that Peisetaerus and Euelpides have

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<sup>439</sup> Cf. Pütz 2008: 234.

<sup>440</sup> Konstan 1997: 16.

<sup>441</sup> Romer 1997: 51.

<sup>442</sup> Romer 1997: 51. Again, this echoes the cyclical theme seen in *PV*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias*. *Birds*, like *PV* and the Platonic dialogues, shows that we are subject to recurrent political cycles when it states that birds are able to reclaim kingship. It also highlights the statement made on pp. 70 and 141, namely that both *PV* and *Birds* contain elements of a divine rebellion, which demonstrate that it is possible (and even inevitable) to regain a previously fallen leadership. Additionally, it points at something which will later characterize Praxagoras' regime as well: despite the new and revolutionary aspects of it, it is also undeniably tied to old political problems.

<sup>443</sup> Cf. Pütz 2008: 234.

<sup>444</sup> *Birds*, 803-805.

not transcended human nature, as they have only achieved a half-metamorphosis.

At the same time, while Peisetaerus and Euelpides may not become true birds in the comedy, the ‘real’ birds certainly humanize over the course of the play, as already suggested on pp. 155-7. Pütz notes:<sup>445</sup>

Es lässt sich zusammenfassen, daß die Mischfiguren in den *Vögeln*...immer menschlicher werden je später sie erscheinen...Die komische Phantasie der Verwandlung von Menschen in Vögel wird also stärker gebrochen. Die Vögel des Chors unterlaufen die gleiche Entwicklung, indem sie immer menschlicher werden. Sie erfinden ihren Erschaffungsmythos, bauen eine Stadt und werden letztendlich wie Menschen wegen Verrats bestraft.

Pütz argues that the animals become gradually more and more human by inventing a story about their origin and by building a city.<sup>446</sup> Towards the end of the play, they are punished for rejecting the city Peisetaerus built, just like human beings would be punished if they committed a similar crime. The humanization of the birds is further accentuated by the fact that their humanization is also an ‘Athenisation’ at the same time (cf. pp. 142 and 154 n. 413), which is especially highlighted by Peisetaerus’ use of the word οἰκίζω in line 183, when he tells Tereus that the birds’ πόλος will become a πόλις as soon as he has settled and fortified it. Prometheus later underlines this in line 1515, when he says to Peisetaerus that he has ‘colonized the air’ (οἰκίσατε τὸν ἀέρα).

This development of the birds, which begins with the acquisition of language and fundamentally human traits (such as desire), and continues with Peisetaerus’ settlement, serves as a comment on the collapse of the traditional virtues in the birds’ realm, as it

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<sup>445</sup> Pütz 2008: 235-236.

<sup>446</sup> The fact that the birds invent a mythological background story for their city (which reaches its comic zenith when, in lines 1353-4, Peisetaerus bases his justification for the birds’ laws on an ‘ancient pillar of the storks’) brings to mind the story of ancient Athens in the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, which, while containing many important connotations, also serves as a genealogical study of contemporary Athens.

continues to break the already blurred boundaries between humans and animals. At the same time, it continues to inform the circular nature of the comedy, because Peisetaerus' new polis begins to bear trademarks of the one he wished to leave behind, before the construction has even officially begun.

The humanization and Athenisation of the birds climaxes in the comic bird-roasting scene that takes place towards the end of the play, already alluded to by Pütz above. It emphasises the birds' humanization by showing that they have been introduced to lawsuits and punishment, and it also outlines one of the problems that come with civilization, namely discrimination.<sup>447</sup> At 1580, Peisetaerus asks for the cheese-grater, as he is in the process of preparing a few birds for roasting.<sup>448</sup> When Heracles asks what sort of meat this is, Peisetaerus replies, ὄρνιθές τινες ἐπανιστάμενοι τοῖς δημοτικοῖσιν ὄρνέοις ἔδοξαν ἀδικεῖν. "It's a number of birds who have been found guilty of attempting to rebel against the bird democracy." Peisetaerus and Euelpides want the birds to follow their laws; the birds that do not oblige break the law and must face the consequences.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Cf. *Birds* 526-33, where Peisetaerus tells the birds that it is normal practice for human beings to hunt birds (whether they are in bird costumes or not).

<sup>448</sup> *Birds*, 1580-1585. Like a true tyrant, Peisetaerus does here what a thousand lines earlier, he had described as one of the indignities human beings always do to birds (and from which, he said, the birds would be protected if they built a city with him). For at lines 532-4, he tells the chorus: ὀπτησάμενοι παρέθενθ' ὑμᾶς, ἀλλ' ἐπικνωσιν τυρὸν ἔλαιον σίλφιον ὄξος. "[human beings] are not content to have you roasted and served up; no, they grate on cheese, oil, silphium, vinegar..." This underlines not only the contradictory nature tyrants tend to possess, but it also shows once again that Peisetaerus still acts very much like a human being.

Peisetaerus' words humorously bring to mind the following fragment from Pherecrates' lost comedy *Miners*, which cannot be dated exactly but was probably performed a few years before *Birds*. It describes the tales of two miners, who break their way into the underworld and discover an abundance of food: ὅπται κίχλαι γὰρ εἰς ἀνάβραστ' ἤρτυμέλαι περὶ τὸ στόμ' ἐπέτοντ' ἀντιβολοῦσαι καταπιεῖν, ὑπὸ μυρρίναισι κἀνεμώναις κεχυμέναι. ("Roast thrushes ready for boiling flew round our mouths, begging us to eat them, spread out beneath myrtle trees and anemones"). Athenaeus 268d-69c. Cf. Stobaeus 4.53.18, vol. V p. 1102 H on the notion that the underworld is paradise-like.

<sup>449</sup> It is not clear how legal the laws are, as it appears that the law-making for the bird-city takes place off stage. I discuss this in more detail on pp. 188-197.

Apart from the fact that this illustrates that the birds have humanized, it also implies that Peisetaerus and Euelpides have no problems with lawsuits, litigiousness, and punishment if they are not in the centre of them. They might tell the birds that they left Athens in order to avoid those things but towards the end of the comedy it becomes clear that this is not entirely true. (Not that there is anything inherently odd or reprehensible about wanting the rule of law and not wanting to be at the rough end of justice, but it does point at one of the fundamental characteristics of νεφελοκοκκυγία). What seems to be true instead is the fact that Peisetaerus and Euelpides only want to evade the lawsuits and arguments of which they are not in charge. Romer writes: “Peisetairos and Euelpides are tricky Athenians, for whom justice is clearly the working of the laws in favor of those who already hold power, a paradoxically tyrannical but ordinary arrangement.”<sup>450</sup>

This also shows that, ultimately, νεφελοκοκκυγία is also a barbarian polis; and Peisetaerus’ and Euelpides’ desire to rule over it echoes their patriotism for Athens (which shows once again that it is possible to take them out of Athens, but evidently impossible to take the Athenian out of them). At *Pol.* 1252b7-9, Aristotle comments on the subjection of a barbarian race (in this case, the birds) to the Greeks. He invokes Euripides and writes, ‘διό φασιν οἱ ποιηταὶ, βαρβάρων δ’ Ἕλληνας ἄρχειν εἰκός.’ “This is why the poets say: ‘it is right that Greeks should rule over barbarians.’”<sup>451</sup> Hall argues, “it is thus the poets, and a tragic poet in particular, whom [Aristotle] selects as supreme illustrators of the self-evident ‘truth’ that all barbarians are naturally inferior to Hellenes.”<sup>452</sup> It seems to me that these quotations

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<sup>450</sup> Romer 1997: 52.

<sup>451</sup> *Pol.* 1252b7-9. Aristotle is quoting Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 1400 here, βαρβάρων δ’ Ἕλληνας ἄρχειν εἰκός, ἀλλ’ οὐ βαρβάρους, μήτηρ, Ἑλλήνων. “Hellenes should rule barbarians, mother, but not barbarians Hellenes.”

<sup>452</sup> Hall 1989: 165. There is a similar line in Euripides’ *Telephus*, paraphrased by Thasymachus when the people of Larissa are threatened by the Macedonians, ‘Shall we, as Greeks, be slaves to barbarians?’ (85 B 2 DK, Eur. fr. 127). See also Herodotus 8.144, where

can convincingly be linked to *Birds*; and they allow us to look at the tyrannical scenes, in addition to the interpretation offered above, as contemporary expressions of Greek superiority over barbarians, especially when connecting them with Peisetaerus' clever use of rhetoric.<sup>453</sup>

Peisetaerus and Euelpides, then, may have undergone a comic physical transformation when they put on their bird costumes, but evidently they keep most of their human features. I do not agree with Romer when he argues, “to all appearances Pisthetaerus and Euelpides are men, but they deny their humanity and claim birdhood (lines 64-68).”<sup>454</sup> Romer bases his argument on the language the two characters use in line 64 (ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐσμὲν ἀνθρώπω) and lines 65 (Ὑποδεδιῶς ἔγωγε Διβυκὸν ὄρνειον) and 68 (Ἐπικεχοδῶς ἔγωγε Φασιανικός), but I think this has more to do with their initial departure from Athens and their (comic) arrival in the sky, rather than with their representation throughout the rest of the play. I do believe that they wish to deny specific aspects of their humanity, specifically the ones that are not in their favour, such as personal lawsuits and debts, but I do not think that they deny their humanity as a whole.

Firstly, if they did, it is unlikely that they would use as many human features throughout the play as they do. Secondly, it is questionable whether they would be able to form a community in νεφελοκοκκυγία if they rejected humanity entirely. Aristotle's concept of κοινωνία illuminates this: τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθησιν ἔχειν: ἢ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν. “For this is proper to human-beings as compared with other

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he expresses similar sentiments, and Hall 1989: 164-5 and 197 for more examples and a brief discussion of how patriotic orations were considered to have an important didactic function in the fourth-and fifth-century, specifically in connection with the tragic genre and the Panhellenic festival at Olympia.

<sup>453</sup> See also DeLuca 2014: 163 who argues: “In Pisthetairos, Aristophanes shows that it takes an Athenian to do universal empire right.”

<sup>454</sup> Romer 1983: 141.

animals: the human alone has perception [αἴσθησις] of what is good and bad and just and unjust and the others; and a community [κοινωνία] of these beings makes a household and a city.”<sup>455</sup> According to Aristotle, only human beings are able to form a community because they alone have αἴσθησις. Animals lack this skill, which implies they do not have commonality. Therefore, it is questionable whether νεφελοκοκκυγία would be able exist (or have any sort of communality) if Peisetaerus and Euelpides rejected their humanity and claimed birdhood.

However, what we do witness is the animalisation of human emotions, at least at the beginning of the comedy: Peisetaerus and Euelpides put on wings in order to fly away from a current situation with which they are not pleased. They do not look for a city that is greater than Athens but for a place that is easier than, but ultimately also similar to, Athens.<sup>456</sup> It seems that in *Birds*, this place can only be found in the sky, which is why Peisetaerus and Euelpides need wings in order to get there.<sup>457</sup> The wings then—and the rest of the bird costume—can also be seen as a mode of transportation that liberates the protagonists from their unpleasant life in Athens. Thumiger writes similarly:<sup>458</sup>

The middle ground [between man and animal] is also confirmed by the fact that human emotions themselves can be animalised: especially (but not exclusively) in the

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<sup>455</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* I.2, 1253a15-18.

<sup>456</sup> This seemed to have been a popular theme in 414. See, for instance, the fragments of Phrynichus' *Monotropos*, which was produced in the same year and at the same festival as *Birds* (*Birds* came second, *Monotropos* came third), and which depicts a similar escape from the city and law-courts. On escape from the city in Old Comedy, especially in plays that date from the period of the Peloponnesian War, see Ceccarelli 2000 and the scholia, vol. 1, p. 425.

<sup>457</sup> Cf. *Peace* 124-126, καὶ τίς πόρος σοι τῆς ὁδοῦ γενήσεται; ναῦς μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἄξει σε ταύτην τὴν ὁδόν. (“But how will you make the journey? There’s no ship that will take you there”). πτηνὸς πορεύσει πῶλος: οὐ ναυσθλώσομαι. (“No, but this winged steed will”).

<sup>458</sup> Thumiger 2008: 7. The motif of emotional affection being represented as winged and feathered appears frequently in Greek drama. For instance, at *Or.* 1593, Menelaus tells Orestes, ἀλλ’ οὔτι χαίρων, ἦν γε μὴ φύγῃς πτεροῖς, and Hermione at *Andr.* 861-5 exclaims, Φθιάδος ἐκ γᾶς κυανόπτερος ὄρνις ἀρθείην, πευκᾶεν σκάφος ἧ̃ διὰ Κυανέας ἐπέρασεν ἀκτάς, πρωτόπλοος πλάτα. See also *Helen* 1487, ὦ πταναι δολιχαύχενες.

image of the bird...the subject as ‘flying away’ [is] an exchange that underlines the equation between the animalised subject and the animalised emotional affection.

This ‘middle ground’ is informed by a comic element in Aristophanes. In particular, while the wings may serve as a tool for liberation, the sky has specific limits here, as the plot of *Birds* draws up certain boundaries, which compel the story to stay in a specific location. This is especially highlighted by the city-walls that Peisetaerus orders the birds to build around νεφελοκοκκυγία, and by his use of the word φράσσω in line 183.<sup>459</sup> “This wall,” Kosak writes, “is the essence of the bird-city: it is the first and only physical structure that is reportedly built.”<sup>460</sup> Additionally, she states, “the focus on the need for and construction of the wall...plays upon an old topos in Greek literature: the argument that men [whether in bird-costume or not] are the true defenders and thus the true essence of the *polis*.”<sup>461</sup> It thus seems evident to me that the funny-looking costumes do not keep Peisetaerus and Euelpides from remaining fundamentally human.

The interim answers to the opening question (‘what makes human beings human’) are then the following: Firstly, human beings have lawsuits, litigiousness, and debts; animals do not (though, as is the case in *Birds*, they may be introduced to them). Secondly, a human being is someone who, even if they have been transformed (physically or metaphorically) into something else, still has the desire to build cities, establish laws, and rule over others. Even if they do not assume the role of a human being, they cannot seem to shake off their humanity – in Peisetaerus’ and Euelpides’ case, it is clear that they do not want to do this anyway. Thirdly, human beings recognise the power and sophistication of language and use it to their advantage. This becomes clear in *Birds*, as the comedy clearly shows the fundamental powers

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<sup>459</sup> *Birds*, 550.

<sup>460</sup> Kosak 2006: 173.

<sup>461</sup> Kosak 2006: 173. Cf. *Birds* 180-184.

of language (and, simultaneously, the consequences of the decline of it seen in chapter 1).

However, the concept of language, and the manipulation of another's language, is difficult. In *Birds*, the matter is complicated even further by the theatrical illusion, the fact that the birds who have been taught Greek by a Thracian are not real birds, but chorus members pretending to be birds, and by the generally fluid nature of Aristophanic comedy (meaning, many masquerades in his plays are subject to change. For example, in *Frogs* Dionysus and Xanthias exchange costumes incessantly and in *Ecclesiazusae*, women dress up as men in one scene only to go back to being women in the next scene).

It is therefore debatable whether the acquisition of language really humanizes the birds when they have been human all along. Yet, if we look at them as 'real' birds, the fact that they speak Greek (or were able to learn Greek), even if their command of the language is not as sophisticated as it could be, this does question the alleged superiority of human beings.<sup>462</sup> A further discussion, therefore, is required, which I will begin by examining some of the ancient concepts of language, especially the Aristotelian notion. This will provide further insight not only into the issue addressed above, but also into the linguistic foundation of νεφελοκοκκυγία and the human activities of law-making and city-building.

#### **IV. Ancient ideas of language as uniquely human: Aristotle**

There is, perhaps, no other ability that has been so eagerly defended as being unique to human beings as the possession of language. Heath asserts, "...the most important early Greek vision of the difference between humans and other animals was the most obvious one

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<sup>462</sup> Additionally, as the discussion in the first chapter demonstrates, superiority is not necessarily eternal and can decline.

of all: we talk; they do not.”<sup>463</sup> Newmyer writes, “Some ancient philosophers eager to maintain that the boundary between animalkind and humankind is fixed and unbridgeable posited the capacity for language as evidence that animals could never cross that boundary.”<sup>464</sup> At the heart of this argument is the denial that animals have a capacity for reason, and their ostensible lack of proper language is supposed to serve as a manifestation of this. This is mainly because some ancient philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, view the possession of language as a demonstration for rational faculty, saying that without language there is no rationality. One reason for that is this: ‘speech’ and ‘rational thought’ are undistinguishable in Greek since *logos* means both word and reason. Etymologically speaking, by having speech (*logon echein*) one automatically possesses reason too, and vice versa.<sup>465</sup> However, as I will examine below, there are also other reasons why many ancient philosophers assert that without speech there is no rationality.

Aristotle asserts that all human beings are by nature political animals. While he believes that all animals have some natural instinct for social learning and perhaps even political thinking, he distinguishes human beings from other political animals. This is despite the fact that he observes “many imitations of human life in the other animals, and more especially in the smaller than in the larger animals one may see the precision of their intelligence...” (πολλὰ ἄν θεωρηθεῖν μιμήματα τῶν ἄλλων ζώων τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς, καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῶν ἐλαττόνων ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν μειζόνων ἴδοι τις ἄν τὴν τῆς διανοίας ἀκρίβειαν).<sup>466</sup> For example, swallows build their nests just as humans build their houses, beginning with the

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<sup>463</sup> Heath 2005: 9. For general discussions of language as the quintessential characteristic of human beings, see Dierauer 1977; Buxton 1982; Thalmann 1984; Sorabji 1993; Pelliccia 1995. For a good survey of animal communication in antiquity (and some of the different philosophical school’s opinions), see Fögen 2014.

<sup>464</sup> Newmyer 1999: 101.

<sup>465</sup> As shown in chapter 1 (cf. pp. 134-7), this is also true in reverse, as speech declines alongside reason.

<sup>466</sup> Aristotle, *HA VIII (IX)*, 612b7.

foundation and then adding the rest.<sup>467</sup> More importantly, Aristotle notes that there are other animals that are political in addition to human beings (cf. p. 136 n. 375). He believes bees, wasps, ants, and cranes exhibit a form of political behaviour because, like humans, they ‘have some one common activity’ (κοινὸν γίγνεται πάντων τὸ ἔργον).<sup>468</sup> The comparison of these animals to human beings is particularly charming and significant because Aristotle lists them all in the same sentence: ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπος, μέλιττα, σφήξ, μύρμηξ, γέρανος.

Additionally, there are differences in political organisation among different groups of animals, just like the government styles of human beings vary: “Some of them live under a ruler, some have no ruler; examples: cranes and bees live under a ruler, ants and innumerable others do not.” (καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν ὑφ’ ἡγεμόνα ἐστὶ τὰ δ’ ἀναρχα, οἷον γέρανος μὲν καὶ τὸ τῶν μελιττῶν γένος ὑφ’ ἡγεμόνα, μύρμηκες δὲ καὶ μυρία ἄλλα ἀναρχα).<sup>469</sup>

Nonetheless, ultimately human beings are more political than other animals because of their unique capacities for language and reason.<sup>470</sup> It is these capacities that allow them to organize communal life [κοινωνία] around shared communication and verbal concepts of justice.<sup>471</sup> Aristotle makes clear that without speech it is not possible to have a community at all. This is because – and this is similar to what will later become a Stoic doctrine – humans’

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<sup>467</sup> Aristotle, *HA* VIII (IX), 612b7.

<sup>468</sup> Aristotle, *HA* I, 488a. A similar reference to bees, wasps and ants appears in *Phaedo* 82b, where Socrates and Cebes discuss the concept of metempsychosis and assert that those who have portrayed practical political virtues such as moderation and justice will be transformed “into some such political and gentle species as that of bees or of wasps or ants, or into the human race again...” (εἰς τοιοῦτον... ἀφικνεῖσθαι πολιτικὸν καὶ ἡμέρον γένος, ἢ που μελιττῶν ἢ σφηκῶν ἢ μυρμηκῶν, καὶ εἰς ταῦτόν γε πάλιν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος).

<sup>469</sup> *HA* I 488a. In this vein, Aristotle also acknowledges that cranes are clever animals (φρόνιμα δὲ πολλὰ καὶ περὶ τὰς γεράνους δοκεῖ συμβαίνειν). Cf. *Statesman* 263d. See also Gerson 1999: 327.

<sup>470</sup> Note that Aristotle sees an undeniable link between *logos* and humans, and *alogia* and non-humans. For scholarship on his view on men and animals see: Fortenbaugh 1971; Clark 1975; Dierauer 1977; Lloyd 1983; Preus 1990; Sorabji 1993; Fontenay 1998; Lorenz 2000; Heath 2005.

<sup>471</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253a1-18

unique possession of speech and language enables them to share their conceptions of the advantageous, the just, and the good. “Language has its *telos* in pursuing justice, thus making the polis possible.”<sup>472</sup> The citizens of the polis interact and cooperate with one another in ways that are far more complex than the ways other political animals use.<sup>473</sup> This is why, “the social formations of other political animals have not attained the degree of organization and specialization exhibited by human beings...their means of communicating with one another are too rudimentary to allow further development.”<sup>474</sup>

Nevertheless, Aristotle does recognise the abilities of other animals to communicate.<sup>475</sup> For instance, at *HA* 536b, he analyses the birds that teach their young to sing, and he sees that the songs they teach vary in different places. This, he believes, is comparable to the diversity of human languages, which suggests that among birds ‘language is not natural in the same way as voice but can be trained.’<sup>476</sup> The parrot, for example, does this by listening to and mimicking humans. Aristotle writes, there “is the Indian bird, the parrot, that is said to be human-tongued” (τὸ Ἰνδικὸν ὄρνειον ἢ ψιττάκη, τὸ λεγόμενον ἀνθρωπόγλωττον, τοιοῦτόν ἐστι).<sup>477</sup> Similarly, at 660a, he notes that all birds use their tongue for communication with one another, which implies that they have the ability to exchange some form of information between them. This, in turn, implies that Aristotle believes that

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<sup>472</sup> Heath 2005: 10.

<sup>473</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253a1-18. Aristotle says that those who do not live in a political society are either inferior or superior to men: animals are incapable of forming such a society; gods do not need one because they are self-sufficient. See *Politics*, 1253a2-4 and 1253a27-29. See also Gera 2003: 37.

<sup>474</sup> Payne 2012: 114.

<sup>475</sup> *DA* 420b5-21a7; *HA* 488a30-35, 504b1-6, 535a28-36b24, 60810-18; *PA* 659b2-60b11, 664a18-65a; *GA* 786b6-88a32.

<sup>476</sup> Aristotle, *HA*, 536b18-20. Note that Aristotle does not equate voice and language since at *HA* 4.9, he writes: “Voice [φωνή] and sound [ψόφος] are different from one another; and language [διάλεκτος] differs from voice and sound”

<sup>477</sup> Aristotle, *HA* VII (IX) 597b27-29.

some animals have natural instincts for (social) learning.<sup>478</sup> This is despite the fact that human beings are the superior animals and that their capacity for learning surpasses that of other animals.<sup>479</sup>

Arnhart infers from this Aristotelian notion that “just as some birds are predisposed by nature to sing, human beings are predisposed by nature to speak...in both cases a natural predisposition is fulfilled through social learning.”<sup>480</sup> Birds learning to sing and humans learning to speak then are two cases that illustrate the natural instincts for learning.<sup>481</sup> Arnhart asserts further, “both humans and birds are inclined by nature to learn particular kinds of verbal signals in particular ways at particular periods in their lives.”<sup>482</sup> However, exactly how much or how well they learn depends on their social training. Those deprived of a proper training will not be able to communicate in a sophisticated and effective manner.<sup>483</sup>

As noted above, Aristotle recognises that birds are able to learn diverse dialects, or different ways of singing, just as human beings can learn different languages. Darwin, who sees it as evidence that “an instinctive tendency to acquire an art is not peculiar to man,” picks

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<sup>478</sup> However, while this does show that parrots have the ability to pick up words and sentences, it simultaneously highlights a (Cartesian) human capacity, “namely the ability to create and understand sentences which have never before been uttered.” Zirin 1980: 325. At the same time, it is also this ability, which, according to Thorpe, takes away part of the human superiority here. He states, “Human speech is unique only in the way in which it combines and extends attributes which, in themselves are not peculiar to man, but are found also in more than one group of animals.” Thorpe 1974: 300.

On a related note, at *Met.* 980a-b, Aristotle states that animals that are born with the power of sensation are able to acquire the faculty of memory, which in turn enables them to learn. Animals who are deaf, however, such as the bee, may be intelligent (and political, as stated above) but they cannot learn due to the lack of sensation.

<sup>479</sup> Another example can be found at *HA* VIII (IX) 630b, where Aristotle mentions the intelligence found in elephants. Years later, Aelian notices a similar capacity for learning among elephants. See *Characteristics of Animals* 2.11. On elephants’ high renown in antiquity, see also Toynbee 1973 and Scullard 1974.

<sup>480</sup> Arnhart 1994: 467.

<sup>481</sup> See also Baker and Cunningham 1985; Kuhl 1991; Marler 1991a, 1991b.

<sup>482</sup> Arnhart 1994: 470.

<sup>483</sup> Arnhart 1994: 470.

up this notion many centuries later.<sup>484</sup> Drawing from the Aristotelian treatise mentioned above, he believes that human beings are not quite as unique as they think they are when it comes to communication and language. Animals may not be able to form a centralized state because any legal institution requires human speech, as Aristotle asserts, but they do exhibit a form of communication that resembles human speech; this is true regardless of the fact that their cognitive and linguistic capacities are not as complex as those of human beings.

These Aristotelian treatises are significant in comparison with the comic utopia of *Birds*, and they enable us to draw up another appraisal of the reality that informs the linguistic and political machinery of νεφελοκοκκυγία. Indeed, they show that it is not a pure image of the oppositions between Athenians and barbarians, but contains an element of *realia*. This, in turn, is significant for my interpretation of the play and it corresponds with the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, ‘what makes human beings human.’ Specifically, Aristotle’s stance sheds light on Tereus’ role as Greek teacher, because it suggests that the birds were not quite as barbarian as Tereus claims they were before he came along. Instead, they emerge as animals that always had the potential to acquire a kind of language, just like human beings, and do more with their verbal signals than ‘just’ singing.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Darwin 1871: 462-63.

<sup>485</sup> Cf. Newmyer 1999: 102, who notes that the ancients were quite fascinated by ‘talking’ birds, such as parrots, as can be seen in Ovid’s *Amores* 2, 6 and Statius’ *Silvae* 2, 4 both of which mourn the deaths of loquacious parrots.

Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*. Lucretius sees the first form of human language as an expression of feelings and an array of diverse, animal-like, sounds. This language was spoken in a manner of cries and gestures (*vocibus et gestu cum balbe significarent*, 5.1022) and was thus composed of *voces* rather than properly articulated names, *nomina rerum*. This suggests that, according to Lucretius, once upon a time, human language was also inarticulate before it developed into something more eloquent.

This recalls the de-evolution humanity has undergone in the future. In the society Wells’ time-traveller visits, human beings have gone back in time to some of the earliest communities, where language is inarticulate and underdeveloped. Cf. pp. 134-6.

Tereus' language lessons, then, emphasise the birds' civil evolution; he recognises their natural instinct for social learning and uses it to improve their linguistic abilities so that they not only sing their own songs but also those of the Greeks.<sup>486</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that the birds' Greek is imperfect, as they lack the ability to be true rational agents who engage in political debate. In this vein, they emerge as a prime example of the inattentive Athenians whom Aristophanes and Plato criticise in their works. They are linguistically advanced but unable to use their skills to do any of the things that they should be doing (at least, according to Aristophanes and Plato), such as measuring what they hear carefully (instead of dismissing their concerns as soon as they hear promising rhetoric), or offering a counterargument.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> A counterargument for this is found in an anecdote that appears much later in Claudius Aelianus' *VH* 14.30. He writes about the Carthaginian Hanno who is said to have obtained a number of birds whom he taught the phrase, 'Hanno is a god.' Once the birds had learned this sentence, Hanno liberated them and let them fly out to the world, hoping that his fame would spread through their utterances. However, the birds soon forgot what they had learned and returned to singing their own songs instead. Cf. *HA* 488b25-27. See also Fögen 2014: 226.

There is a different version of the story in Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.8, where the Libyan Apsethos wanted to become a god. He gathered some parrots and taught them to say, 'Apsethos is a god.' Once the parrots had mastered this phrase, Apsethos set them free, and they flew all over Libya and Greece, uttering the sentence they had been taught. The Libyans believed them and began to worship Apsethos as a god until a cunning Greek became aware that the parrots were making false claims. So, he retaught them to say: "Apsethos shut us up and forced us to say 'Apsethos is a god.'" Once the Libyans heard this, they killed Apsethos. (There are also two 'successful' versions of the story. See Maximus of Tyre, *Phil. Orat.* 29.4, and Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 1.14).

These stories, while different genres from different places, and from a different time, underline a principle of the Stoics: the birds possess parrot talk, and utter what someone tells them to, but lack rationality and internal speech. They also show what can happen when someone is used as a mouthpiece and the ignorant masses believe (and repeat) everything they say without evaluating ('measuring') their words first. This in turn brings to mind the point made in the section on the *Protagoras*, namely that it is important to use the science of measurement in order to estimate prospective levels of advantages and disadvantages in political proposals (cf. pp. 107-109).

<sup>487</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Them.* 29.4-5, where Themistocles compares human speech to embroidered tapestries which must be unrolled before the pattern can be displayed properly. For when the tapestries are rolled up, they conceal and distort the pattern. Themistocles uses this simile to convey his unease about using an interpreter with the Persian King. It shows the principles of hidden meaning in speech that must be discovered. See Gera 2007: 451-453 and Zadorojnyi

The birds' lack of agency reflects both the behaviour of the Athenian masses off stage who are quickly persuaded by eloquent (but empty) rhetoric without giving it proper thought, and what happens when someone superior (i.e. an Athenian) takes advantage of someone inferior (i.e. a barbarian) who may give consent to something they do not fully comprehend. It also presents an unpleasant vicious cycle: the birds are unable to master the Greek language, because they lack the political agency that human beings have, and they are unable to acquire said agency, because it only comes when one has completely mastered Greek.<sup>488</sup> In this sense, it seems that human beings are indeed unique in this respect because they are able to do what the birds are not. This continues to underline the ability to use a fully structured language setting, which defines Peisetaerus as a distinct rational agent and political orator.

Finally, there is one last point that I would like to make before ending this section: even if the birds were able to perfect their Greek and use it as eloquently as Tereus and the two protagonists do in the comedy, it does not really eradicate the boundaries between them. For even though the birds humanize over the course of the play, and even though Peisetaerus and Euelpides have been put into bird costumes, at the end of the day they are still human beings, whereas the birds end up as just roast chicken. Thus, the joke continues to be on them.<sup>489</sup>

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2014: 307. This anecdote relates to *Birds* because it reminds of the birds' inability to work out (and 'unroll') the true meaning of Tereus' and Peisetaerus' speech.

<sup>488</sup> In a way, the birds' dilemma hints at a problem that is later conceived by thinkers such as Rousseau. He sees speech and sociability as a chicken-and-egg problem: society is necessary for the invention of language, and language is essential for the formation of societies. See Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. See also Gera 2003: 161.

<sup>489</sup> There is a modern parallel, which illuminates this aspect further. At the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund in Lima, Peru in 2015, Christine Lagarde urged the delegates to take action on global warming and said: "If we collectively chicken out of this we'll all turn into chickens and we'll all be fried, grilled, toasted and roasted." Failure to take action, the *Business Standard* wrote afterwards, "will condemn humanity to the same fate as the Peruvian poultry that so many delegates to the group's annual meeting are enjoying this week in a country famed for its cuisine." *Business Standard*, 8 October 2015.

## V. Plutarch's *Moralia*

500 years after *Birds*, Plutarch offers a counterargument to the belief that animals cannot be rational agents who are able to offer alternative arguments. The recourse to Plutarchan political theory is profitable, because the comparison of some of the rhetorical strategies seen in *de sollertia animalium* and *Gryllus* with those in *Birds* highlight the rhetoric of the birds at the beginning of the comedy when they express their dismay to Tereus who has allowed human beings to enter their realm. The comparison suggests that the birds may actually be able after all to visualise more than one way of life (i.e. one with human beings and one without). In this vein, the discussion presented here also conforms to some of the themes discussed in chapter 1 (e.g. change and sophistic rhetoric) and the general undertaking to unravel the nuances of discourse seen in texts from different periods.

In *de sollertia animalium*, Plutarch argues that it is wrong for human beings to believe that only they are capable of rationality and proper use of language, and animals are not. He builds his argument on the fact that not all humans possess the faculties of rationality and language to the same degree. For example, infants are likely to have a lower degree of rationality and language.<sup>490</sup> Even though in their cases, these degrees usually develop over time, Plutarch takes this as evidence that at least some species of animals have higher capacities of rationality and language than infants or other ‘marginal cases’ of humans.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> *De. Soll. An.* 360c-d.

<sup>491</sup> Newmyer 1996: 40 asserts that “such ‘marginal cases’ [could, for example, include] infants, the mentally feeble, or perhaps the severely physically handicapped.” Note that this does not mean that animals’ rationality is always higher than that of humans. Generally, Plutarch asserts that animals have some reason but they cannot attain to the full capacity of reason to which education and practice can lead humans (*De. Soll. An.* 962c). The main difference between animal reason and human reason to Plutarch then, is quantitative rather than qualitative. See Becchi 2000: 207 and Newmyer 2014: 227.

There is a similar comparison of animals to children at *Rep.* 441a-b, where Socrates states, καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς παιδίοις τοῦτό γ’ ἄν τις ἴδοι, ὅτι θυμοῦ μὲν εὐθὺς γενόμενα μεστὰ ἐστὶ, λογισμοῦ δ’ ἐνίοι μὲν ἔμοιγε δοκοῦσιν οὐδέποτε μεταλαμβάνειν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ ὀψέ ποτε. (“For

This is why, asserts Plutarch, human beings cannot deny rationality to animals that possess the same capacities of reason they ascribe to such classes of human beings. In this vein, he opens up a debate that discusses the extent to which animals may possess rationality.

At *de animae procreatione* 1026a, Plutarch gives the following definition for speech, λόγος δὲ λέξις ἐν φωνῇ σημαντικῇ διανοίας. “Speech is the expression of the mind by significant utterance...” Plutarch defines speech as a sound that signifies thought, and he believes that it is not just human beings who are capable of uttering significant sounds but animals are as well. The fact that animals are able to constitute genuine language by means of their vocalizations, regardless of whether humans understand them or not,<sup>492</sup> continues to emphasise the argument that animals do have rationality. For example, Plutarch states, at moments of slaughter, animals are said to cry out for justice even if it sounds just like inarticulate noises to the slaughterers.<sup>493</sup>

Plutarch tackles the question of animal rationality in the following three treatises: *de sollertia animalium*, *de esu carniū*, and *bruta animalia ratione uti* or *Gryllus*. The first one discusses the question of who is more clever, sea-dwelling animals or land-dwelling animals to which no real conclusion is reached (cf. *de. soll. an.* 985c), but Plutarch seems to suggest that both are equally intelligent. The second, *de esu carniū*, presents a case for vegetarianism, and in *Gryllus*, Plutarch portrays an imaginary account of Odysseus on Circe’s

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that much one can see in children, that they are from their very birth chock-full of rage and high spirit, but as for reason some of them, to my thinking, never participate in it, and the majority quite late”). To which Adeimantus replies, ἔτι δὲ ἐν τοῖς θηρίοις ἂν τις ἴδοι ὃ λέγεις, ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει. (“And further, one could see in animals that what you say is true”).

<sup>492</sup> Newmyer 2014: 229 states: “The problem with animal language may...not lie with the animals themselves, but with humans who have not yet mastered their language, a circumstance which Plutarch would argue, in *De esu carniū*...has devastating consequences for animals.”

<sup>493</sup> *De esu carniū* 968e and 994e. This also echoes the notion that Plutarch, unlike the Stoics, believes that animals deserve to be treated justly by humans.

island. As noted at the beginning of this section, *Gryllus* is the most relevant source here and I offer below an interpretation of Gryllus' sophistic tendencies and their relevance to *Birds*.

In the dialogue, Odysseus has come to Aiaia to rescue his companions who, by Circe's magic, have been transformed into pigs. However, one of the pigs, Gryllus, declines Odysseus' offer to help persuade Circe to transform him back into a human being, because he prefers being a pig.<sup>494</sup> Gryllus believes that animals are superior to human beings because they possess every virtue of them but none of their vices, such as lust or excess.<sup>495</sup>

In particular, he thinks that animals are by nature more capable of a virtuous lifestyle than human beings are, which is especially evident in the rhetorical question he asks Odysseus: τίνας μὲν οὖν οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ σοφωτάτῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων; (“what virtues do they not partake of in a higher degree than the wisest of men”)?<sup>496</sup> Indeed, it is Gryllus' insistence on nature (τὸ ὄλον ἢ φύσις) that makes up the basis of his argument.<sup>497</sup> Gryllus' elaborate explanation (presented below) underlines Plutarch's belief that animals do possess rationality, and that they have the capacity to make reasoned judgments, at the same time as it provides a comic counterargument to the Stoic debate that denies rationality to animals. It is evident in Gryllus' way of argumentation that animals do have the capacity for “deliberating and acting pragmatically in cases involving things that are ‘relative to us’, including those things that are

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<sup>494</sup> Achilles' talking horse Xanthus (*Il.* 19.404-17), who reminds Achilles of his mortality, belongs to the same tradition of talking animals.

<sup>495</sup> Herchenroeder 2008: 362 notes that none of Plutarch's other extant work assumes that animals are superior to human beings. They may be attributed *comparable* powers of sensation, judgment, and perception but they are not superior. On another note, this also shows again the extent to which Aristophanes' birds have humanized, because they now possess some of the human vices which Gryllus dislikes.

<sup>496</sup> *Gryllus* 4.

<sup>497</sup> *Gryllus* 990d. See also Newmyer 2014: 227 and Newmyer 2017: 66. Herchenroeder 2008: 359-360 connects this persistence on *physis* with the general parodic aspect of the text. As he asserts: “Apart from epic material, the dialogue parodies philosophy too, especially the concentration on *physis* and its counterpart, the theme of the Golden Age, that appear in much philosophical discourse.”

subject to chance and, sometimes, things tainted by what is irrational.”<sup>498</sup> This is why human beings have no right to mistreat or belittle them.

Plutarch chooses specific examples for Gryllus to illustrate that, in some aspects, animals surpass human beings in terms of intelligence, behaviour, and character.<sup>499</sup> Gryllus makes many important points; amongst others, he mentions that animals never beg or sue (δέησις δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδ’ οἴκτου παραίτησις), that another animal would never enslave them (οὐδὲ δουλεύει λέων λέοντι καὶ ἵππος ἵππῳ δι’ ἀνανδρίαν, ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπος ἀνθρώπῳ), and that they are by nature inclined to be courageous, unlike human beings (οἷς δὴ μάλιστα δῆλον ὅτι τὰ θηρία πρὸς τὸ θαρρεῖν εὖ πέφυκε).<sup>500</sup>

The point Gryllus makes in regards to animals having a greater natural capacity for bravery is especially significant. Gryllus bases this claim upon his observation that in situations of conflicts and crises, animals show courage as genuine impulses. Human beings, on the other hand, only show courage because they are afraid of possible punishments and

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<sup>498</sup> Horkey 2017: 110. This is in direct contrast with Aristotle’s claim, βουλευτικὸν δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶ τῶν ζώων. (“The only animal which is deliberative is man”). *HA* 488b24-5.

<sup>499</sup> Cf. Newmyer 1996: 42. Gryllus’ speech is a typical expression of the Golden Age. It has often been argued that Gryllus adapts Cynic thinking, mostly because of his key point that animals are wiser than human beings, but at the end of the day, it is not just about whether his arguments are Cynic, anti-Stoic, anti-Epicurean or something else because his “expressions offered a conventional form of response to the political and social inadequacies one perceived in the world.” Herchenroeder 2008: 369. See also Mossman 2006: 7. Certainly, like Aristophanes in *Birds*, Plutarch in *Gryllus* is also interested in discussing human beings, their institutions, and human nature, and not just animals.

<sup>500</sup> Plutarch, *Gryllus* 4. Aelian makes a similar point at *Characteristics of Animals* 6.1, when he asserts that unlike men, who need language to persuade others to be good, animals do not need extraneous encouragement, because they are able to stimulate their prowess for themselves. (Aelian specifically refers to boars, lions, elephants, and bulls here).

Following this logic, Tereus lives more as a human than a hoopoe in *Birds* because he has a slave (70). This is also evident in the subsequent lines when the slave-bird mentions some of Tereus’ favourite foods, such as pea-soup (ἔτνος), which, according to the slave-bird, he likes because it reminds him of the time when he was a man (75-8). It is also made clear by the allusion to his representation in line 103, when Euelpides asks him about his lack of feathers (σοὶ ποῦ τὰ πτερά;). On that, see also the scholia 103.

sanctions that may be placed on them.<sup>501</sup> Human courage, Gryllus argues, is a matter of “slavish submission (*douleuousan*) to custom and censure,” which is not courage but merely fear of punishment. He says:<sup>502</sup>

ὥσθ' ὑμεῖς, κατὰ νόμων ἀνάγκην οὐχ ἑκούσιον οὐδὲ βουλομένην ἀλλὰ δουλεύουσιν ἔθεσι καὶ ψόγοις καὶ δόξαις ἐπήλυσι καὶ λόγοις πλαττομένην, μελετᾶτε ἀνδρείαν καὶ τοὺς πόνους ὑφίστασθε καὶ τοὺς κινδύνους, οὐ πρὸς ταῦτα θαρροῦντες ἀλλὰ τῷ ἔτερον μᾶλλον τούτων δεδιέναι.

It follows that your practice of courage is brought about by legal compulsion, which is neither voluntary nor intentional, but in subservience to custom and censure and moulded by extraneous beliefs and arguments. When you face toils and dangers, you do so not because you are courageous, but because you are more afraid of some alternative.

This statement comes with a central implication: human beings yield to institutions, societal expectations, and human-established laws, and animals do not, which puts them in a position that is superior to that of human beings (in this regard).<sup>503</sup> This is primarily because, Gryllus says, animals possess an unrestrained amount of freedom. Their natural resistance – again, Gryllus builds his argument on nature – to be held captive in those human institutions is, according to him, a sharp contrast to human society. The definition of human society here is an institution of slavery and an emblem of cowardice because it stems from submission.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> *Gryllus*, 987c-d.

<sup>502</sup> *Gryllus*, 988b-c. Aristotle makes a similar point at *NE* 1115a when he asserts, ὅτι μὲν οὖν μεσότης ἐστὶ περὶ φόβους καὶ θάρρη, ἤδη φανερόν γεγένηται. (“Courage is the observance of the mean in respect of fear and confidence”).

<sup>503</sup> Herchenroeder 2008: 364. Yet, according to Aesop, there was a time when animals did hold assemblies in the woods. They had political society and societal expectations, two things that Gryllus attributes to be specifically human. See, for example, the fable *Zeus and the Tortoise*, where the tortoise declines to fulfil a societal obligation and is punished for it. Cf. p. 150, with n. 400 for Tereus’ use of ἀθροίζομεν when he rallies the birds.

<sup>504</sup> Gryllus echoes a Cynic perspective here, and a phrase that has been attributed to Diogenes of Sinope, one that offers the possibility to reject institutions and society (and the corruptions that come with it) and to return to a more primitive lifestyle: ἐλευθερία ἢ ἐπὶ Κρόνου. See, for instance, Hercher 1965:32; Vidal-Naquet 1978: 135; Sorabji 1993: 158-61; Gera 2003: 60, and Herchenroeder 2008: 369.

It is clear that Gryllus contradicts himself quite a bit here and that there are elements of irrationality in his argument (either that, or his definition of freedom is rather different from that of others). Given his place as a bewitched captive, on a remote island, whose life is essentially in Circe's hands, his aforementioned position is rather absurd.<sup>505</sup> His role as a domesticated pig does not really fall under the rubric of 'animal freedom' about which he brags when talking to Odysseus.<sup>506</sup> This is accentuated by the fact that he only boasts to Odysseus about the advantages of being an animal in the first place because Circe has told him to do so. Gryllus responds to her call in a similar vein to which domesticated pets answer to their masters.<sup>507</sup>

It is true that Gryllus is free from human society, which, given his strong objections to it, constitutes a large part of his definition of freedom. It also continues to underline how, according to Plutarch, "all animals share of discursive thinking and reasoning in the process of employing practical wisdom,"<sup>508</sup> that is, a form of wisdom that reflects their circumstances and attempt to make good choices. In Gryllus' case, as stated previously, this practical wisdom stems primarily from the premise that human beings tend to enslave other human beings whereas animals would never enslave one another. Nonetheless, it does prompt the reader to ask whether Gryllus' role as Circe's pet, and his dependence on her, really offers the kind of freedom he describes in the dialogue. For what difference does it make whether he yields to a human as a pet, or to a human institution as a person?

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Gryllus' way of argumentation recalls Callicles' assertion analysed in chapter 1 (cf. pp. 70-1), namely that one can (and should) reject already established conventions and arguments. In this vein, it also brings to mind the sophists' approach that it is always possible to propose a counterargument.

<sup>505</sup> He even recalls the captives of the Homeric Circe: lions and wolves that were trained to behave like domesticated dogs (*Od.*10.212-9).

<sup>506</sup> Cf. Aesop's *The Wolf, the Dog, and the Collar*, where the wolf chooses freedom over luxury when he sees a dog who, while well-fed, has an iron collar on his neck.

<sup>507</sup> *Gryllus*, 986a-b.

<sup>508</sup> Horky 2017: 110.

That being said, in his defence, he has got no easy task. After all, he used to be a man and he has kept his human mind (according to *Od.* 10.239-40); making a case for the superiority of animals therefore when he has no real insight into their minds must be difficult. As Konstan writes, "...Gryllus is either pure pig, as he apparently is before Circe endows him with speech and reason, or else effectively a human being in the shape of a pig..."<sup>509</sup> In this sense, Gryllus has no more the mind of a pig than Peisetaerus that of a bird, and, at the end of the day, "he is really a human being in pig's clothing,"<sup>510</sup> just like Peisetaerus is a human being in bird costume.

To look at this from a different point of view: at 986e, Odysseus asks Gryllus if he has not only lost his shape when he drank Circe's potion but also his intelligence:

ἐμοὶ σύ, Γρύλλε, δοκεῖς οὐ τὴν μορφήν μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ὑπὸ τοῦ πώματος ἐκείνου διεφθάρθαι καὶ γεγονέναι μεστὸς ἀτόπων καὶ διαλελωβημένων παντάπασι δοξῶν.

For my part, Gryllus, I think that not just your shape but your intellect too was spoiled by that potion, and that you have become stuffed with altogether absurd and disgraceful beliefs.

There are undoubtedly humorous elements in Odysseus' accusation (and obviously the dialogue itself is intended to be funny), but if we take it literally, and presume that it is true that Gryllus has lost his mind, then it might offer an explanation as to why Gryllus' arguments come across as absurd. In a related vein, according to Konstan, the language in the dialogue suggests that Gryllus was never exceptionally clever anyways, but 'piglike in his thinking' even before the transformation, which makes the task to reason well even more difficult.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Konstan 2010-2011: 372.

<sup>510</sup> Konstan 2010-2011: 384.

<sup>511</sup> Konstan 2010-2011: 375. Certainly, at the end of the day, Gryllus' illogic is also 'simply' part of the parody Plutarch presents us with in *Gryllus*. On that note, see also Herchenroeder

Nonetheless, Gryllus' argument is not entirely unconvincing. As stated above, his point recalls that of Callicles in the *Gorgias*, who abhors certain human institutions and the restrictions they put on him, but who loves the natural order of things (such as the advantage of the naturally strong over the weak), and also that of the sophists who assert that every logos can be met with an antilogos. Herchenroeder writes, "such is the cast of Plutarch's Gryllus, a lowly brute rivalling the heroic speaker, Odysseus, in a sophistic contest."<sup>512</sup> In this sense, Gryllus does not appear as merely 'piglike' in his thinking, but also as a pupil of the sophists who attempts to argue against the established human institutions Odysseus represents in the dialogue.<sup>513</sup>

## VI. *Gryllus* in relation to *Birds*, 321-370

Gryllus' sophistic tendencies have the potential to highlight the rhetoric of the birds at the beginning of the comedy further, especially the passages where they express their dismay to Tereus who has allowed human beings to enter their realm (lines 321-70). They also have the potential to present a comic counterargument to the opinion that animals can never be rational agents, and they inform the theme of change and oscillation discussed in chapter 1 (cf. pp. 59-60) and the question, 'how should we live and how should we behave?' (cf. p. 61). This is why they should be considered in some detail; the birds' language in lines 321-70, presented below, does bear strong elements of resistance and hostility, which suggests that,

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2008: 347, who argues, "Plutarch's *Gryllus* [offers] a humorous portrait of elite perspectives regarding language and sophistic learning."

<sup>512</sup> Herchenroeder 2008: 359.

<sup>513</sup> Odysseus himself makes this observation at 988e-f, παπαί, ὃ Γρύλλε, δεινός μοι δοκεῖς γεγονέναι σοφιστής. ("You, Gryllus, seem to me have been born an amazing sophist"). Gryllus admits this a little later, at 989b, ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ σε μὴ λέληθα σοφιστῆς ὄν. ("Since it did not escape your notice that I am a sophist..."). Trans. Herchenroeder, adapted.

like Gryllus, they are capable of visualising more than one way of life (i.e. one with human beings, and one without).

At 321, the Chorus tell Tereus that by inviting two human beings into their land, he has committed the biggest fault (μέγιστον ἔξαμαρτῶν) since they have known him. They feel betrayed (προδίδωμι) and maltreated (πάσχω), and believe that Tereus has lured them into a trap (εἰς δὲ δόλον ἐκάλεσε).<sup>514</sup> Especially, the birds' use of δόλος is significant because it implies that they are aware (or at least, suspicious) of the trick that is being played on them, because it looks like a setup.<sup>515</sup> Additionally, at lines 344-353, the Chorus instruct the other birds to launch a hostile attack (ἔπαγ' ἔπιθ' ἐπίφερε πολέμιον ὄρμᾶν φονίαν) against Peisetaerus and Euelpides, and to 'pluck and peck' (τίλλειν καὶ δάκνειν) them. The inclusion of words such as ἐπιφέρω, πολεμέω and δάκνω demonstrate that, before Tereus and Peisetaerus speak to the birds, they are more than sceptical and prepared to defend their land against the Athenian visitors. A related set of words is spoken at 365 when the Chorus leader says, ἔλκε, τίλλε, παῖε, δεῖρε ("drag them, pluck them, hit them, flay them"), thus making clear again that they wish to protect themselves from the human intruders.<sup>516</sup>

They only stop at line 375, when Tereus tells them that they should give Peisetaerus and Euelpides a chance because 'the wise can learn much from enemies' (ἀπ' ἐχθρῶν δῆτα πολλὰ μανθάνουσιν οἱ σοφοί), and it is this sentence that ultimately enables Tereus to persuade the birds with the speech discussed earlier. Nonetheless, this strong initial opposition is noteworthy, because it raises a potential counterargument to the conclusion reached earlier when the birds end up as mere roast chicken after they have marched into the trap of

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<sup>514</sup> *Birds* 321-335.

<sup>515</sup> See, for example, *Od.* 8.276 which uses the same word when describing how Hephaestus sets the trap for Ares, αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τεῦξε δόλον κεχολωμένος Ἄρει. ("This snare the Firegod forged, ablaze with his rage at War").

<sup>516</sup> This demonstrates again that the birds have not really overcome their status as barbarians despite having learned Greek, for they pick force over debate.

νεφελοκοκκυγία without evaluating the political proposal that has been presented to them carefully. Certainly, Peisetaerus himself says that the birds on the grill are birds that attempted to rebel (ἐπανάστημι) against the bird democracy (1585), and connecting this statement to the passages quoted above, it is possible to suggest that those are birds that have never let go of their initial suspicion. In this sense, those birds could be characterised as animals who are able to conceptualise a different set of social rules which is why they portray a courageous attempt at resistance against the human invasion into their realm.<sup>517</sup>

Given the strong language at the beginning, I think a characterisation as such is not entirely fruitless and it does allow us to propose that there are two groups of birds in νεφελοκοκκυγία and each group is part of a different political faction. In this sense, the first group of birds may consist of animals who will not let go of their initial distrust; they do not listen to Tereus, but instead look at Peisetaerus and think, ‘this Athenian is an untrustworthy persuasive orator who jeopardizes our pastoral setting.’ This would not only echo the Aristotelian sentiment discussed earlier, namely that some animals do exhibit a form of political behaviour and communication (cf. pp. 170-1), but also the sophistic notion analysed in chapter 1 (cf. p. 60), that already formulated governments and ideas do not necessarily have to be accepted without questioning, but that it is possible to offer an alternative argument.<sup>518</sup>

The second group of birds may consist of animals who resemble the Athenian masses off stage and, like parrots, repeat everything Peisetaerus says, as they are being deceived by

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<sup>517</sup> Similar uses of ἐπανάστημι underline this further. See for example App. *Hisp.* 101, where Quintus Sertorius raises Spain in revolt against the Romans (Ιβηρίαν τε αὐτὴν ἐπανάστησε Ῥωμαίοις).

<sup>518</sup> It also underlines the cultural ascent the birds have undergone before the play when Tereus distributed Greek among them. In addition to having been given language and reason, they have also been given the ability to visualise more than one way of life.

his rhetoric.<sup>519</sup> They happily accept the new conditions of life that Peisetaerus puts on them, and repeat his promises without assessing them.<sup>520</sup>

It is clear that the separation of the birds into different factions may stretch the boundaries of the comedy a bit because, at the end of the day, the rebellious birds may merely be a comic representation of the fear of political rebellion and oligarchic factions off stage.<sup>521</sup> However, the hostile language used by the birds suggests that such an exploration is not entirely fruitless, because it shows how initial doubt about a politician, or proposed political regime, can be swept away with rhetoric, especially rhetoric which, seemingly nonchalantly, invents a historical past that relates to the birds' environment and thus appeals to them. In this vein, the separation can also be used to revisit the problems analysed in the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras*, especially the difficulties that come with weighing sight and sound carefully.

Precisely, these two factions of birds may emerge as prime examples of those Athenians who blindly follow any persuasive orator and elect any scoundrel as leader without evaluating his speeches, and those who think more carefully about it and who attempt to 'measure' the words with which they are being addressed in order to ensure the best outcome for them.<sup>522</sup> The behaviour of the two different factions also underlines the limitations of

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<sup>519</sup> *Birds*, 1705-1765.

<sup>520</sup> Cf. Dunbar 1997: 11-12. "...did Aristophanes expect his audience to identify with Peisetairos and think 'We Athenians *are* a clever, enterprising lot; no other race could hope to keep up with us, or resist our ingenious arguments', or to react with e.g. 'This man is a dangerously persuasive orator, a typical pupil of the sophists!'"

<sup>521</sup> This in turn brings to mind the prohibition of political factions in *Utopia*: when there are no factions and no opportunities to propose counterarguments, no political rebellions can be suggested.

<sup>522</sup> This brings to mind another argument Brennan makes in his book (cf. p. 103 n. 284). He asserts, "Countries used to exclude citizens from holding power for bad reasons...but though this was unjust, it remains open that there could be good grounds for restricting or reducing some citizens' political power. Perhaps some citizens are incompetent participants who impose too much risk on others when they participate. Perhaps some of us have a right to be protected from their incompetence." Brennan 2016: 18. Brennan's point is undoubtedly

rhetoric: while it can be used to convince ‘the doctor to be your slave,’ as Gorgias makes clear, it is evidently not strong (or, nuanced) enough to convince the masses to listen cautiously.<sup>523</sup>

## VII. νόμοι in νεφελοκοκκυγία

It may be difficult to determine whether these rhetorical images suggest that some of the birds really are clever rebels who use certain expressions in order to voice their disdain or whether all of them are foolish parrots who mindlessly accept what is happening. Old Comedy is not fettered to the realities of any of this and is at liberty to eliminate any structures from the real world that would impede the plot; but it is also free to open up all sorts of possible interpretations, especially when they are situated within the assembly practices of fifth-century Athens. I think it would be more foolish to dismiss these rhetorical images as a mere comic element than to attempt to understand their place in the time of Aristophanes and their relationship to the (inattentive) Athenian masses of stage.

The attempt to understand these images allows for a further exposition of the parody with which the audience is, in my opinion, presented here (cf. p. 157): politics

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provocative (and I do not wish to agree with him), but it does highlight the problems some of the birds face due to the other birds’ inability to question Tereus’ and Peisetaerus’ rhetoric.

<sup>523</sup> *Gorgias* 454b. This point is true not only in regards to the masses, but also to individuals. For example, at Eur. *Hec.* 814-820, Hecuba speaks of the power of rhetoric, τί δήτα θνητοὶ τᾶλλα μὲν μαθήματα μοχθοῦμεν ὡς χρὴ πάντα καὶ ματεύομεν, Πειθῶ δὲ τὴν τύραννον ἀνθρώποις μόνην οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον ἐς τέλος σπουδάζομεν μισθοὺς διδόντες μανθάνειν, ἵν’ ἦν ποτε πείθειν ἅ τις βούλοιο τυγχάνειν θ’ ἅμα; (“Why is it that we mortals take pains to study all other branches of knowledge as we ought, yet we take no further pains, by paying a fee, to learn thoroughly the art of persuasive speaking, sole rulers where mortals are concerned, so that we might be able to persuade people of whatever we wish and gain our ends?”).

However, at 334-5, she acknowledges that her rhetoric has failed her when she tried to save Polyxena, thus underlining its limitations. οὐμοὶ μὲν λόγοι πρὸς αἰθέρα φροῦδοι μάτην ῥιφέντες ἀμφὶ σοῦ φόνου. (“My speech pleading against your murder has been cast idly to the winds”). Cf. Mossman 1995: 134.

continue to enter (bird-) fantasy and humans persevere with infiltrating the realm of animals. I would like to contextualise the previous exposition (cf. 156-8) against an interpretation of the legal system that Peisetaerus installs in νεφελοκοκκυγία; and in what follows I situate the birds' laws within the legal practices and laws of fifth-and fourth century Greece. This approach seems to me to be worth pursuing, because the positioning of the birds' laws within the history of (Greek) legal thought adds further material to the laboratory of political thought I aim to draw up in this thesis. Indeed, the nuances of the birds' legal system are worth exploring, because they continue to help us make sense of the patterns of legal reforms and political discourse throughout the history of jurisprudence.

To begin, let us look at the birds' punishment on the brazier and ask a few questions: What evidence is there for the birds' guilt? Who found them guilty? What kind of bird democracy (δημοτικοῖσιν ὀρνέοις) does νεφελοκοκκυγία actually enjoy?<sup>524</sup> So far, we have learned two things about the birds' legal system: (1) The law-making takes place off stage, which makes it difficult to ascertain how legal the laws are, and (2) we know that the birds have 'many laws' (πολλοὶ γὰρ ὀρνίθων νόμοι)<sup>525</sup> most of which seem to be proclaimed at the whim of Peisetaerus. The νόμοι that are specifically mentioned, or implied, are the following:

1. Everything that is disgraceful among humans is admirable among birds.<sup>526</sup>
2. Foreigners are to be expelled.<sup>527</sup>
3. All quacks are to be beaten up.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Sommerstein 1987: 303.

<sup>525</sup> *Birds*, 1346.

<sup>526</sup> *Birds*, 755-6.

<sup>527</sup> *Birds*, 1012-14. ὥσπερ ἐν Λακεδαίμονι ξηνηλατοῦνται. See Dunbar 1997: 560. "The Spartan tendency at this period [to expel foreigners] is twice unfavourably contrasted with Athens' free and open society in Perikles' speeches in Thuc. (I.144. 2, 2. 39. I). Foreigners were expelled...probably at least as much as to protect the citizens from harmful foreign influences as to prevent foreigners from seeing what went on Sparta..." See also Figueira 2003, who makes institutional connections about Pericles' usage of *xenelasia*.

4. It is customary to put a bounty on (long-dead) tyrants and/or enemies of the bird democracy.<sup>529</sup>
5. It is not allowed to keep birds in cages in the courtyard.<sup>530</sup>
  - a. If there are birds that are caged up, they are to be released.
  - b. Everyone who does not obey will be arrested.
6. It is illegal to enter νεφελοκοκκυγία without permission.<sup>531</sup>
  - a. There are border patrols that check for entry passes.<sup>532</sup>
7. It is meritorious to strangle and bite one's father.<sup>533</sup>
8. There is an ancient lawcode written on the Pillars of the Storks, which must be obeyed.<sup>534</sup>
9. Father-storks must take care of their young who, when grown up, must care for their fathers in return.<sup>535</sup>
10. It is customary to have slave birds.<sup>536</sup>
11. Birds convicted of crimes may face the death penalty, followed by roasting.<sup>537</sup>
  - a. Treason may demand a more severe punishment than the death penalty.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> *Birds*, 1015-16. Peisetaerus refers to a scroll here from which he reads the same statement at lines 983-985. He claims that he has received these words from Apollo (981) but it is more likely that he is making it up, which is also what the oracle-monger, who has entered the scene a few lines before, accuses him of doing. (οὐδὲν λέγειν οἶμαί σε).

<sup>529</sup> See Sommerstein 1987: 272. "...the last 'tyrant' (autocrat) of Athens, Hippias son of Peisistratus, had been expelled in 510...nevertheless at every Assembly meeting a curse continued to be pronounced against any who aspired 'to become tyrant or to join in restoring the tyrant'...this helped to keep the fear of tyranny alive in the popular mind..." See also Dunbar 1997: 583. Cf. *Thesm.* 338-9.

<sup>530</sup> *Birds*, 1084-7.

<sup>531</sup> *Birds*, 1175.

<sup>532</sup> *Birds*, 1214 and 1221.

<sup>533</sup> *Birds*, 1347. See also 757-9.

<sup>534</sup> *Birds*, 1353-4. See also l. 981.

<sup>535</sup> *Birds*, 1357. See Sommerstein 1987: 288. "...that young storks fed and cared for their aged parents was a widespread popular belief: cf. [Pl.] *Alc. I* 135e; Arist. *HA* 615b23-24; Aelian *NA* 3.23; and probably also Soph. *El.* 1058-62." Note that this law contradicts the seventh law; this inconsistency may be there for the comic effect, underlining the comical arbitrariness of the laws.

<sup>536</sup> Tereus, for example, as mentioned earlier (cf. p. 180 n. 500), has a slave bird, which contradicts Gryllus' argument that animals never enslave one another at the same time as it underlines the human attributes of the bird democracy.

<sup>537</sup> *Birds*, 1584.

<sup>538</sup> *Birds*, 1585-6. The 'rebel birds' are convicted of treason, which is why Peisetaerus grates silphium on them as an added indignity. See Sommerstein 1987: 303, who notes: "So in

The visit of the inspector offers further insight into the νόμοι of νεφελοκοκκυγία. When the inspector asks Peisetaerus where the honorary consuls of the δημοτικοῖσιν ὀρνέοις are (ποῦ πρόξενοι;), Peisetaerus blatantly ignores the question and chases him away with the words: οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; οὐκ ἀποίσεις τὸ κάδω (“Shoo off, will you—and take your voting-urns with you!”).<sup>539</sup> This implies that:

12. There are no honorary consuls in νεφελοκοκκυγία.

13. It is not customary to have voting-urns in νεφελοκοκκυγία.

When a decree-seller enters the scene and proposes to the Cloudcuckoovillians (Νεφελοκοκκυγιεὺς) the usage of Athenian measures, weights and decrees as the Olophyxians do, Peisetaerus tells him to leave.<sup>540</sup> He does not seem to believe that there is anything valuable in the laws the decree-seller hopes to sell, which is also indicated by his τὸ τί; in line

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actual Athenian practice traitors (and also temple-robbers) were not only sentenced to death but forbidden burial in Attica (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.22).”

<sup>539</sup> *Birds*, 1021 and 1032. On line 1021, see Mack 2015: 71, who notes, the Athenian “does not just represent the attitudes and needs of a functionary of the Athenian Empire. His need for information on the local political conditions prevailing in Cloudcuckooland—and advice for how to proceed in his mission—was the same that any other representative of a city had, and he, naturally, relied on his city’s *proxenoi*.” The fact that Peisetaerus does not answer the Athenian’s question, sheds further light on the uncertain political conditions of νεφελοκοκκυγία, and it also suggests that νεφελοκοκκυγία might not be the most hospitable city, which then also links to the construction of the wall earlier in the play. At the same time, however, it also shows how νεφελοκοκκυγία differs from Athens, and this is, after all, the rationale for building it in the first place – to find a place that is easier than Athens.

<sup>540</sup> *Birds*, 1040-5. Cf. Dunbar 1997: 569-70. “The main provisions of this clause, that the citizens of Cloudcuckootown are to use the same weights and measures (and decrees...) as those of another (minor) city in the Athenian empire (Olophyxos...), would be familiar to many of the audience from their service on the Boule.” See also Slater 1996: 100-101, who notes that this scene offers “evidence for a private trade at Athens in copies of assembly decrees” and it “shows us that some individuals were quite willing to pay money for their own, written copies of decrees...”

1039, which is his initial response to the decree-seller's νόμους νέους ἤκω παρ' ὑμᾶς δεῦρο πωλήσων ("I'm here to sell you some new laws") in lines 1037-8.<sup>541</sup> Thus:

14. Athenian measures, weights, and decrees are not to be used in νεφελοκοκκυγία.

These then are the laws and customs of νεφελοκοκκυγία, which seem to be characterized by a blend of Athenian, Spartan, and 'Bird' elements. However, nothing is said about the actual law-making except for the mentioning of an alleged ancient bird-law code. This suggests that there are more νόμοι than the fourteen listed above—in fact so many that it is probably easy for Peisetaerus to invent non-existing laws since no one knows what the laws are in the first place. The lack of voting-urns (and the reluctance to have any) draws further attention to the dubiousness of the political and legal system of νεφελοκοκκυγία.

That being said, a lack of voting-urns does not necessarily mean lack of voting, but lack of secret voting, i.e. voting in the courts. It is clear that Peisetaerus and Euelpides are not fond of voting urns and jury-courts, because they represent "the very element of Athenian life that [they] detest."<sup>542</sup> Therefore, for Athenians like them, the removal of these two juridical elements is a welcome change. For others, however, this change is dubious indeed, because the absence of voting urns and jury-courts "removes the possibility of recourse to the courts that was the defence of any citizen in a democracy."<sup>543</sup>

The emphasis on the ancient pillars of the Storks is particularly thought provoking. Apart from the fact that it provides a significant counter-argument to Gryllus' statement that animals do not have to yield to νόμοι (as do the laws of νεφελοκοκκυγία in general), it also

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<sup>541</sup> See Dunbar 1997: 569. "τὸ τί; probably means 'To what effect?', i.e. 'What's in these 'new laws' which you hope to sell?'"

<sup>542</sup> Sommerstein 1987: 269.

<sup>543</sup> Bowie 1993: 170.

poses the question whether the pillars exist in the first place or whether anyone has actually ever seen them.<sup>544</sup> Or, if they do exist, where are they located? Are they put up in the agora of νεφελοκοκκυγία, so that they are easily accessible and the birds can quickly consult them, as they go on their daily business?<sup>545</sup> If yes, then this would imply that the Cloudbuckoovillians are able to read (and re-read) the actual text of the law-code as many times as they want. This idea is supported by the Athenian who wishes to become a citizen of νεφελοκοκκυγία because he is keen on their laws: πάντων: μάλιστα δ' ὅτι καλὸν νομίζεται τὸν πατέρα τοῖς ὄρνισιν ἄγγειν καὶ δάκνειν.<sup>546</sup> Granted, there is the possibility that the Athenian only says this because he likes what he has heard about the birds' laws. However, it could also serve as a clue that there is an actual written law code, which the visitor has seen and read.

However, even if there are pillars (or perhaps even wooden tablets and more scrolls like the one Peisetaerus shows to the oracle-monger), can we be sure that the Cloudbuckoovillians are able to read them properly? Tereus, Peisetaerus, Euelpides, the immigrants from Athens, (and presumably even Prokne) are certainly able to, but how good is the birds' reading (and writing)? If it is as unsophisticated as their spoken Greek, there is a

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<sup>544</sup> Cf. Plato, *Laws* 793a-d. Here, the Athenian asserts that unwritten laws (ἄγραφα νόμιμα) are 'ancestral customs' (πατρίους νόμους) that make up the foundation of the constitution. They might make the law code longer (μακροτέρους ποιῆ τοὺς νόμους), however, they are important and must not be left out of the law code.

<sup>545</sup> This question is further complicated by the fact that it is unclear whether there is an agora to begin with. When Meton proposes to build one in lines 1004-9, he does not receive genuine support from Peisetaerus. On that note, see also Kosak 2006: 174: "the play makes no mention of building streets, temples, *agorai*, *stoai*, theaters, even new nests." Furthermore, "in *Birds*, the center, which is also the city, comprises practically the whole world; at the same time, the center has no central meeting place...for exchange of ideas and commerce." Kosak 2006: 174 n. 5. The play does not mention the construction of law-courts either, which underlines further the questionability of the birds' guilt: if there are no law-courts, how were the rebellious birds prosecuted? In this sense, Peisetaerus' use of ἀδικέω at 1585 is ironic: if there was no law-suit and thus no real possibility of defence, this means that the verdict has been reached without a trial. This is only exacerbated when looking at what he says beforehand, ἔδοξαν ἀδικεῖν – the birds *seemed* to be guilty.

<sup>546</sup> *Birds*, 1347-8.

chance that they do not fully comprehend the laws even when they are visibly set up in the agora. If the birds are unable to properly read the laws, it is easy for Peisetaerus to add to, subtract from, or alter the law code. Which leads to the next question: how do we know that the recording of the laws has been done correctly? Can we really be sure that Peisetaerus has not tampered with them to adjust them to his purposes?

Plato discusses a similar issue in his *Laws*, written about half a century after the first production of *Birds*. At 722e, Plato describes written law as a ‘despotic prescription’ (τυραννικὸν ἐπίταγμα) because it allows tyrants and despots to order and threaten the citizens by simply writing a decree on the wall and then be done with it (κατὰ τύραννον καὶ δεσπότην τάξαντα καὶ ἀπειλήσαντα γράψαντα ἐν τοίχοις ἀπηλλάχθαι).<sup>547</sup> A comparable sentiment is expressed at 718b-c when the Athenian asserts:

ἂ δὲ χρή μὲν αὖ καὶ ἀναγκαῖον εἰπεῖν νομοθέτην ὅστις ἄπερ ἐγὼ διανοεῖται, ἐν δὲ σχήματι νόμου ἀναρμοστεῖ λεγόμενα, τούτων περὶ δοκεῖ μοι δεῖγμα προενεγκόντα αὐτῷ τε καὶ ἐκείνοις οἷς νομοθετήσῃ, τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα εἰς δύναμιν διεξελθόντα, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἄρχεσθαι τῆς θέσεως τῶν νόμων

And then there are things which a lawgiver who thinks as I do should – and indeed must – talk about, but which do not lend themselves to being stated in the form of a law. For these, in my view, he must present a model which he himself and those he is making laws for can follow – explaining everything else to the best of his ability – and only after that make a start on putting his laws in place.

This leads to the next question: if there are written laws, how do we know that Peisetaerus explained to the birds (i) how to use them, and (ii) what he means by them? In this sense, it is also unclear whether the laws include Peisetaerus’ opinion on what is good and bad.<sup>548</sup> In a way, this recalls the open texture of Athenian law. Aristotle, who is fully aware of this, asserts in his *Rhetoric*, written about sixty years after *Birds*, that this is why “one of the crucial tasks

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<sup>547</sup> For a good synopsis and general discussion of the debate about written and unwritten law, see Nightingale 1999. Plato’s concerns here clearly bring to mind those of More, who worries about despots who tamper with laws.

<sup>548</sup> Cf. *Laws* 823a.

facing the litigant was to define clearly the nature of the wrongdoing his case involved.”<sup>549</sup> Certainly, if the birds lack information about the potentially open texture of their own law-code, it makes it difficult for them to properly use and follow their laws, which again questions the justification of their punishment.<sup>550</sup>

However, in case there are not any actual pillars, or any written law code for that matter, then that does echo an ideology that developed in late fifth-century Athens. Thomas argues that this ideology associated the rule by written law with democracy and the rule by unwritten law with oligarchy.<sup>551</sup> This thought is also evident in fourth-century texts. For example, Aeschines states that autocracies and oligarchies are administered by the whims of their leaders, and democracies by the written, established, laws (τυραννίδες καὶ ὀλιγαρχίαι τοῖς τρόποις τῶν ἐφεστηκότων, αἱ δὲ πόλεις αἱ δημοκρατούμεναι τοῖς νόμοις τοῖς κευμένοις).<sup>552</sup> This then would not only highlight Peisetaerus’ tyrannical autocracy, but also the assumption that the law-making in νεφελοκοκκυγία is based on his impulses. This is potentially further underlined by the possibility that Peisetaerus draws up obscure laws deliberately in order to release, and demonstrate, his power of decision-making in the bird-city.<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Harris 1994: 139. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1374a.

<sup>550</sup> This also brings to mind *Rhet.* 1368b, where Aristotle asserts that in order for an agent to be found responsible for a crime, the accuser must be able to demonstrate that the wrongdoing was committed willingly.

<sup>551</sup> Thomas 1995: 16-19. See also Harris 1994: 133 and Nightingale 1999: 106.

<sup>552</sup> Aeschines, *Ag. Tim.* 1.4

<sup>553</sup> In a way, this recalls Aristotle’s *Const. Ath.* 9.2, where he notes: “the laws of Athens were often unclear, with the result that the people had the power of decision at trials. It should come as no surprise that one of the first acts of the Thirty was to eliminate or alter the laws of Solon that contained points of dispute which might give the court broad latitude in reaching its decision (*Athenaion Politeia* 35.2). Some argued that Solon deliberately made the meaning of the laws obscure so as to unfetter the dicasts’ power of decision. But Aristotle rightly dismisses this view and argues that the alleged lack of clarity in Solon’s laws is caused by the difficulty of ‘defining what is best in general terms.’” Harris 1994: 138.

These uncertainties and the fact that it is not clear what kind of legal system νεφελοκοκκυγία utilizes, emphasise the difficulty of the three questions asked at the beginning of this section. First of all, it is not clear what kind of evidence there is for the birds' guilt, because it is unclear what kind of (written or unwritten) laws there are in the first place and whether the birds are able to access them.<sup>554</sup> Secondly, it is uncertain who found the dead birds guilty because there is no mentioning of law courts or jurors in νεφελοκοκκυγία. Thirdly, and this is the only question that has become a little clearer, the bird democracy νεφελοκοκκυγία enjoys is not a democracy, but an autocracy that is run in an arbitrary manner by Peisetaerus.

On the one hand, the inconsistencies and uncertainties of the law code are clearly only there for the comic effect, and they are situated firmly within the Old Comic tradition. As Aristotle asserts in *Poetics*, in comedy the broken rules are presumed by the text because if they were to be discussed, the comic effect would disappear. Comedy is an imitation of low and lawless characters, which aims at representing men at their worse.<sup>555</sup> (This is in contrast with tragedy, which usually requires a full discussion of violations of laws). Moreover, by

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<sup>554</sup> That being said, even if there is no clear evidence for the birds' guilt, they could have been convicted on the base of probable cause. Harris refers to Aeschines' *Ag. Tim.* 1.90-91 and asserts: "The Athenians...did not employ different standards of proof in public and private cases: the accuser in a public case was not held to a stricter standard of proof. Aeschines...distinguishes between those who are 'clearly' guilty and those who must be convicted on the basis of probability, but he takes it for granted that men could be condemned to death merely for their reputation and on the basis of mere likelihood." See Harris 2013: 318. This would then deem Peisetaerus' use of ἔδοξαν ἄδικεῖν in line 1585 as sufficient enough for the birds' prosecution.

<sup>555</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, V. Years later, Leo Strauss provides a counter-argument to this. He believes that (Aristophanic) comedy is superior to tragedy because it is the best medium to portray the highest human type, the philosopher. Comedy is an excellent medium for the wise because they laugh and joke at death and the gods, which is why they are able to live peacefully and at ease, much like the Olympian gods themselves. See Strauss 1989: 106-9.

implanting incongruous Spartan νόμοι in νεφελοκοκκυγία, Aristophanes mocks the Athenians' enemy, which is a rich source of humour in many of his plays.<sup>556</sup>

On the other hand, these inconsistencies in the legal structure and the reliance on patchy 'historical documents' (i.e. the ancient bird law code) reinforce the arbitrary law-making that takes place off stage. In this way, *Birds* presents an autocratic lawmaker whose questionable laws point to the abuse of powerful rhetoric and the deterioration of objectivity and justice. Nevertheless, comparably with Orwell's *Animal Farm*, this great seriousness about the nature of the autocracy and its law code is balanced by a pronounced comic sense – it provides the opportunity to laugh at utter human failure in a way that is distressed by an awful sense of despair.<sup>557</sup>

## **VIII. *Animal Farm***

### **VIII.a. The connection between Aristophanes and Orwell**

There is more to be said about the similar ideas in *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, because in both cases the authors employ pathos and humour, which also serves as a good example of political satire. It is certainly profitable to analyse these similar ideas, especially when we pin them to More. This comparative literary approach with historical foundations not only continues to interrogate the political and legal mind of human beings by looking at it from the

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<sup>556</sup> See also Nelson 2016: 233, who refers to the more general inconsistencies of Peisetaerus' plan (such as the fact that he presents himself as friend of the birds only to betray them in the end), and argues: "The inconsistencies recall Athens, a city that prided itself on its leisure (Thuc. 2.38) and yet never rested (Thuc. 1.70), that saw itself as both tyrant (Thuc. 2.63, 3.37; *Knights* 1114) and benevolent leader (Thuc. 1.73-77, 2.40), and that seems to have risen to be the greatest state in Greece almost by accident."

<sup>557</sup> Cf. Morse 1995: 89-90. Cf. Bakhtin 1968: 38. "We find a characteristic discussion of laughter in one of the most remarkable works of Romantic grotesque, 'The Night Watches' of Bonaventura...speaking through the medium of his narrator...the author offers a curious explanation of laughter and of its mythical origin. Laughter was sent to earth by the devil, but it appeared to men under the mask of joy, and so they readily accepted it. Then laughter cast away its mask and looked at man and at the world with the eyes of angry satire."

(serio-comic) point of view of the ‘other,’ but it also traces the development of political thought from Aristophanes in fifth-century Greece to More in sixteenth-century England and, finally, to Orwell in twentieth-century England. This, in turn, connects with the task of this thesis, namely to make sense of patterns of legal reforms and political discourse and theories across time and space.

Aristophanes and Orwell both walk a fine line by maintaining a balance between different political ideas that can be enjoyed by differently minded audience members and readers. For example, in *Birds*, the roasting of the recalcitrant birds is something the democrats in the audience might enjoy because it undermines a failed rebellion against democracy. The construction of the bird-democracy that turns out to be a tyranny, on the other hand, is something the oligarchic audience members might find funny because it portrays the weaknesses of democracy. A comparable phenomenon occurs in *Animal Farm*: we witness the foundation of animal socialism (with democratic elements) that turns out to be an oligarchy, which underscores the limitations of (democratic) socialism. At the same time, we observe the establishment of a pigs’ oligarchy that is eventually transformed into totalitarianism (with ochlocratic tendencies), which highlights the dangers of the former.

This satirical portrayal of different political mind-sets not only attracts a wide audience, but it also allows a two-sided picture to emerge that forces them to look at both sides of the story.<sup>558</sup> T.S. Eliot writes in a letter to Orwell in 1944 (in which he rejects his

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<sup>558</sup> Cf. Kirscher 2004: 759. In 1945, “William Empson warned Orwell that, since allegory ‘inherently means more than the author means’, his book might mean ‘very different things to different readers’. Sure enough, English communists attacked *Animal Farm* as anti-Soviet, while a conservative chided Orwell for forgetting that private property is a prerequisite of personal freedom. Western propagandists hijacked the book after Orwell’s death, but twenty years later George Woodcock found it showed the identity of governing-class interests everywhere, and by 1980 Bernard Crick had to caution against reading it as a case *for* revolution. In 1998 critics were still debating whether *Animal Farm* implied ‘that revolution always ends badly for the underdog, hence to hell with it and hail the status quo’. The

manuscript), “I think you split your vote, without getting any compensating stronger adhesion from either party – i.e. those who criticise Russian tendencies from the point of view of a purer communism, and those who, from a very different point of view, are alarmed about the future of small nations.”<sup>559</sup>

Orwell, like Aristophanes, is fully aware of what he is doing. As he says in *Why I Write*, “*Animal Farm* was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.”<sup>560</sup> Similarly, both writers portray a ring-composition in their texts: they present a place, which is transformed over the course of the story, only for it to bear such close resemblance to its initial presentation at the end of it, that it is virtually indistinguishable from it in many respects. More importantly, both Aristophanes and Orwell demonstrate the recurrence of political structures, brought about by deceptive rhetoric and swayed masses who rashly surrender power at seemingly opportune moments of foundation and revolution.

Kirschner highlights their connection further: “...genuine progress, [Orwell] believed, ‘can only happen through increasing enlightenment, which means the continuous destruction of myths.’ This has been the writer’s task since Aristophanes, and in the 1940s it was not confined to exposing Russian communism.”<sup>561</sup> Furthermore, as stated in the introduction (cf. pp. 3-4 n. 9), Orwell praises Aristophanes and other humorous writers because they “show a

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confusion, as Empson saw, came not only from readers’ prejudices but also from the story itself.”

<sup>559</sup> T.S. Eliot, 13 July 1944, letter to Orwell. However, Eliot also praises Orwell’s writing skills and compares him to Swift (“... [This] is something very few authors have achieved since Gulliver”). This recalls the connections made between Swift and Orwell in the introduction, and how their serio-comic narratives are applicable in discussions with reference to Aristophanes. (cf. pp. 41-3).

<sup>560</sup> Orwell 1946, *Why I Write*.

<sup>561</sup> Kirschner 2004: 766.

willingness to attack the beliefs and the virtues on which society necessarily rests.”<sup>562</sup> Like Aristophanes, he addresses topics, “which the rich, the powerful and the complacent would prefer to see left alone.”<sup>563</sup>

This approach also recalls that of More, who offers with *Utopia* a work that is both beneficial and entertaining at the same time. I argue that the ancient political satire (seen in *Birds*) can be compared with the modern one (seen in *Animal Farm*) when we connect both of them with *Utopia*, because the style of More echoes that of Aristophanes and resurfaces in Orwell. For instance, the question whether it is morally permissible for a ruler to make his own laws (and tamper with them) is applicable to both Aristophanes and Orwell; and it is clear that this question brings to mind not only Callicles’ fondness for the stronger to deal with the law, but also More’s disdain for monarchs and their intricate laws. At the same time, the comic attributes related to the different styles of contemporary governments that are present in both texts can be compared with More’s satirical presentation of his own occupation as a lawyer, as he takes one extreme and turns it into another (comic) extreme on *Utopia*.

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<sup>562</sup> Orwell 1945, *Funny, but not Vulgar*. (See Angus and Orwell 1968: 285).

Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Rhet.* 8.11, ἡ δέ γε κωμῳδία ὅτι πολιτεύεται ἐν τοῖς δράμασι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖ, ἢ τῶν περὶ τὸν Κρατῖνον καὶ Ἀριστοφάνην καὶ Εὐπόλιον, τί δεῖ καὶ λέγειν; ἢ γὰρ τοὶ κωμῳδία αὐτὴ τὸ γελοῖον προστησαμένη φιλοσοφεῖ. (“Does it even need to be said that comedy in the dramas, the comedy of Cratinus, Aristophanes, and Eupolis, involves itself in civic affairs and philosophizes? For comedy itself, by approaching what is ridiculous, philosophizes”).

<sup>563</sup> Orwell 1945, *Funny, but not Vulgar*. In regards to the possibility that ‘the rich, the powerful and the complacent’ might be wrongdoers, the following section from Platonius’ *On the Different Sorts of Comedy* comes to mind: ἐπι τοίνυν τῆς Ἀριστοφάνους καὶ Κρατίνου καὶ Εὐπόλιδος κωμωιδίας ἀφόρητοὶ τινες κατὰ τῶν ἀμαρτανόντων ἦσαν οἱ ποιηταί. (“So then in the time of the comedy of Aristophanes and Cratinus and Eupolis the poets were an irresistible force against wrongdoers”). Koster I.2-3, 12-14. Cf. Horace’s *Satires* 1.4.1.

### VIII.b. Political factions in *Birds* and *Animal Farm*

I suggested above that the birds in Aristophanes' comedy possess two different political mind-sets, one that is pro-Peisetaerus and one that is against him. Similarly, the diversity of the animals in *Animal Farm* is stressed by their different personalities and thoughts. Like the birds, they are all subject to the same change of rule but they do not necessarily act as a united body. The group of animals that may be compared best to the recalcitrant birds in Aristophanes are the hens that attempt two rebellions upon hearing that they must surrender their eggs to the pigs. Neither of the rebellions is fruitful: the first one is cut short by setting a stop to the hens' food rations, which results in the death of nine hens, and the second one ends in the slaughter of the three hen ringleaders.<sup>564</sup>

Nonetheless, those hens are some of the more daring animals on *Animal Farm* because they have the courage to stand up to Napoleon. "Led by three young Black Minorca pullets, the hens made a determined effort to thwart Napoleon's wishes."<sup>565</sup> Like the rebellious birds in *Birds*, the hens possess an independence of mind that makes them question the political decrees the pigs put forward, despite the eloquent rhetoric with which they are being delivered. In the hens' case, it is not so much about the fact that they have to surrender their eggs, but about the ostensible arbitrariness of that command – this becomes clear when the hens fly up to the rafters, lay their eggs there, and smash them to the ground afterwards. They still lose the eggs but it is a kind of loss that derives from their personal wish, rather than from the pigs' arbitrary request.

The hens, then, appear as rational agents who question the logic behind the pigs' orders. In a sophistic (and 'Calliclean') manner, they do not accept the politics established by

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<sup>564</sup> These complications highlight once again one of the features of *Utopia*: there are no political factions and thus no opportunities to rebel against the establishment (whether successfully or unsuccessfully).

<sup>565</sup> Orwell 1945: 56.

the pigs as authoritative only because they have become familiar through habit and speech. Instead, they begin to envision an oppositional set of decrees; and they apply a concept of the sophists when they provide a counterargument to the already formulated one. Specifically, they seem to think, 'whatever we do, we will lose our eggs. But if we smash them ourselves, at least we will lose them of our own accord rather than of the government's accord.' Rather than accepting and adapting to the ever-changing policies, the hens attempt to resist and by doing so, portray a mind-set that is independent from that of the pigs. Their resistance therefore, comparable with that of the rebellious birds, can be considered a revolutionary act against the established system.

The group of birds that celebrates Peisetaerus as a benevolent saviour can be compared to two factions on *Animal Farm*. The first one consists of animals that mindlessly follow Napoleon and his commands, because they are unable to discover the true meaning of his agenda. A few suspicions might arise here and there, but ultimately they are all swept away with persuasive words whose true meanings the animals do not really question, either because they do not want to or because they are unable to. Their (feeble) attempts to reason clearly are always shut down by rhetoric and public opinion. Consequently, in a manner reminiscent of *Birds*, this group of animals may be able to speak, read, and write, but they cannot work out the likely consequences of the decrees that Napoleon and the other pigs implement on the farm.

The second faction consists mostly of pigs and may be best compared to Tereus and his 'erotic' qualities in *Birds* (cf. pp. 154-6). Like the first group, it is made up of impressionable followers; however, unlike the first group (and unlike Tereus), its members are aware of what Napoleon is doing. They celebrate him as a hero and as someone who has stepped in to restore justice to the animals. Tempted by freedom and led astray by power,

these animals are happy to please Napoleon, as they do not only believe in his politics, but also in the fulfilment of his promises. They may be capable of imagining a different set of social rules, however, it is clear that they do not want to. To them, Napoleon's political ideas are the solution to their problems, and they exercise their collective consciousness to implement them on Animal Farm.

In this way, the pigs praise Napoleon as an intelligent pig that has come to liberate the animals from their human owner, just like some of the birds celebrate Peisetaerus as a clever Athenian who has come along to reinstate divinity to their realm – and it is clear that both Napoleon and Peisetaerus are depicted as eloquent, but ultimately, deceptive rhetors. Additionally, in both texts, the audience witnesses a match between 'superior against inferior,' which is justified by some in both cases. In Aristophanes, as stated on p. 165, it is about the portrayal of an Athenian's superiority over barbarians, and in Orwell, the following statement from T.S. Eliot comes to mind (taken from the same letter quoted above), when he tells Orwell: "...your pigs are far more intelligent than the other animals, and therefore the best qualified to run the farm...there couldn't have been an Animal Farm at all without them: so that what was needed (some might argue), was not more communism but more public-spirited pigs."<sup>566</sup>

In both *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, the animals are promised that they are about to advance on a mission that will right every wrong that has ever been done to them and their ancestors, as it will lift them from ostensible oppression up to a better state of existence. Unbeknownst to many of them, from this point on, law is a pure command, fabricated, and alterable, at the will of the leader, and based on mysterious ancient documents that may or

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<sup>566</sup> T.S. Eliot, 13 July 1944, letter to Orwell.

may not exist. At the end, all there is left is repression and a sense of despair. The small elite may have reached their goal but the majority of the animals certainly have not.

Certainly, this is the important point here, it is not about the “complete reconciliation of the pigs and the humans,” as Orwell writes in the 1947 preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, but about the “loud note of discord” with which it ends.<sup>567</sup> The same is true for *Birds* (and *Utopia*): it is not just about the Athenisation of the birds (and the policies that keep the Utopian citizens from tampering with the law), but also about the uneasiness that comes with it.<sup>568</sup>

### **VIII.c. Two missed turning points**

In a letter to Dwight Macdonald, Orwell writes:<sup>569</sup>

I did mean [*Animal Farm*] to have a wider application in so much that I meant...violent conspirational revolution, led by unconsciously power-hungry people can only lead to a change of masters. I meant the moral to be that revolutions only effect a radical improvement when the masses are alert and know how to chuck out their leaders as soon as the latters have done their job. The turning point of the story was supposed to be when the pigs kept the milk and apples for themselves. If the other animals had had the sense to put their foot down then, it would have been all right...you couldn't have a revolution unless you make it for yourself; there is no such thing as a benevolent dictat[or]ship.

This accentuates the relevance of *Birds* to *Animal Farm* because both stories make clear that unless the masses are alert, and stop the rash surrender of power to the elite, and rebel when

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<sup>567</sup> Angus and Orwell 1968: 406.

<sup>568</sup> There is, of course, much more to be said about the humanisation of the animals and their engagement with human vices (such as desire, drinking alcohol, murder, and tampering with laws). This certainly relates to *Birds*, and to the cyclical nature which informs both texts. However, due to the limited scope of this thesis, I focused in this section on the behaviour of the hens and the significance of their rebellion against Napoleon. For a good analysis of the humanisation of the animals, see Popescu 2012, especially pp. 198-200.

<sup>569</sup> Orwell 1946 – this letter is a response to Macdonald's query about the meaning of *Animal Farm*.

necessary, there will be little hope for benevolence, freedom, and equality. This includes knowing when to protest. In *Animal Farm*, this should be, as stated above, when the pigs decide to keep the milk and apples for themselves. However, the other animals do not realise that they should at least try to say something, and by missing this turning point, they surrender what little power they have left to pig leadership. There are a few attempts afterwards (as is evident in the case of the hens), but at that point the pig tyranny is already too far advanced in order for it to be overthrown effectively.

A similar phenomenon occurs in *Birds*: here the turning point of the story is when Peisetaerus grills the first birds and puts cheese and silphium on them. This is when the other birds should wake up from their ‘dream of eros’ and understand that Peisetaerus is not really concerned about their wellbeing as he initially said he was. However, similarly to the animals in *Animal Farm*, they fail to seize the *καιρός* and, by doing so, give Peisetaerus the opportunity to continue with his political agenda in whatever way he wishes. (As shown in the discussion of the *Statesman*, it is the masses’ failure to recognise *καιρός* that enable the *κόλαξ*, who *does* recognise *καιρός*, to proceed with his agenda). The birds’ collective lack of agency is thus apparent once again, and this time too, it does nothing but lead to their doom. The rebellious birds may take a chance when they collectively attempt to challenge the regime, but ultimately the misled collectivism of the masses is the one that really dominates.

This failure to know when to protest and when to be alert, underlines the point these stories have in common. It is not so much about giving up revolutionary hopes altogether and look at what is happening with a sense of hopelessness; instead, it is about the embrace of a kind of personal responsibility on the part of revolutionaries.<sup>570</sup> This attitude brings to mind More’s civil philosophy (cf. pp. 34-6) and his optimistic outlook, which states that while it

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<sup>570</sup> Letemendia 1992: 136-7.

may not be possible to make everything good unless everyone is good, what can be done in the meantime is to work towards the confinement of the vicious and the reduction of the evil. This includes seeking progress through the failure of revolutions itself. Along the lines of Orwell's statement, 'all revolutions are failures, but they are not all the same failure,' the rebellious animals in Aristophanes and Orwell, while unsuccessful, portray a Morean-like attitude and show that not all self-determination is lost.

That being said, the failure to know when to be alert also shows, like the *Statesman* and *Protagoras*, that the masses must learn to listen closely to an orator's rhetoric, since eloquence does not equate with political competence. If they fail to do so (and, as made clear in chapter 1, this undertaking is exceptionally difficult), they will never have the political regime that is actually beneficial to all.

## **IX. Chapter Conclusion**

In addition to the points made on pp. 168-9 in regards to what makes human beings human, the following observations can now be added to the list. Firstly, human rhetors and political leaders (even when in bird-costume) may employ Gorgianic rhetoric and force their agenda onto others without being concerned about the consequences this might have. Secondly, human beings tend to miss the right point in time (καιρός) to protest, just as they miss the opportunity to measure the words the orator uses to address them. This in turn, as has been shown in the discussions of the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras* (cf. pp. 94-5 and 108-9), influences their levels of happiness and unhappiness. Nonetheless, as *Birds* and *Animal Farm* demonstrate, this does not mean that humans cannot learn through failed revolutions. By maintaining a sense of self-determination and an attitude that resembles that of the sophists, they also embrace a personal obligation on the part of revolutionaries.

Furthermore, this chapter illuminates some of the ways in which Orwell can be compared with Aristophanes and More, because all three authors highlight the connotations of distinct patterns of legal reforms and deliberative discourse which often include a ring-like composition, which not only echoes that of the cosmos in Greek thought, but also that of previous regimes. The serio-comic allusions to unjust laws and unsuitable rhetoric, which are present in all three texts, also link to some of the points made in the introduction and chapter 1. In particular, they inform the sophists' notion that arises with the ascent of man, namely that 'every logos can be met with an antilogos' (which recalls More's elimination of that very possibility at the same time), but they also show that neither the argument nor the counterargument has to be necessarily free from deceit and injustice.

Additionally, the points made in this chapter illustrate the ways in which different factions engage with established regimes and different forms of power, and how they are influenced by cyclical ideas of rhetoric and political structures (which underlines More's disdain for intemperance in talking and his prohibition of political factions). The realms of the animals, infiltrated by human political behaviour and speech, show that the return to origins looms over the characters' heads continuously and cannot be broken unless the masses begin to see rhetoric for what it really is.

## CHAPTER 3

### Female Deliberative Rhetoric and State Ideology in Aristophanes and Gilman

#### *I. Lysistrata*

##### **I.a. The Figure of Lysistrata**

The recourse to the animal world begins to outline the importance of the problem that informs the continuous return to origins, and it explores cases that highlight the role deliberative rhetoric, legal reforms, and want of political agency play in these returns. In this chapter, I look at the role of women in legal discourse and state ideology. I utilize female societies and stories about reversed gender-roles in Aristophanes, Herodotus, Apollonius of Rhodes, and Gilman, and different epistemologies (comic fantasy, inquiry, myth, and modern political science fiction), and examine how these fantastic worlds (which, like the animal world, portray an ‘Other’) continue to help us think reflectively about the speeches, laws, and political issues of our own society.<sup>571</sup>

I begin with *Lysistrata* because it conforms to the ring compositions discussed in the previous chapters, as it presents an Athens that is being dismantled at the beginning of the comedy, only for it to return to its origins at the end of it. Like the texts discussed in the other chapters, the play is remarkable not only for its portrayal of notions of (temporary) ascent and descent, but also for its interest in speech and persuasion, the forces and limitations thereof, as well as the understanding and lack of understanding that inevitably comes with it. In this vein, the analysis of the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras* is especially relevant because the play

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<sup>571</sup> Cf. Lehman 1997: 2. “We believe, rightly, that we will gain new insight into ourselves and our own legal system by better understanding how other societies and cultures have taken different paths to resolve...social questions.”

shows what results when articulate (and well-intended) speech, for want of political agency and improvement, is met with miscomprehension on the listeners' side, and being dismissed as inept. However, it also shows what happens when rhetorical discourse, which systematically uses specific examples from history, tragedy, and legal and deliberative oratory, is used to unite groups from different places that are otherwise separate.<sup>572</sup>

Furthermore, *Lysistrata* (like *Ecclesiazusae*) is comparable with the modern political and social thought presented by Gilman, and it also bears a clear literary resemblance to More's *Utopia* when placing it within a comparative analysis of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century text. As is the case in *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, it is not hard to find parallels between the upheavals presented in the comedies (such as the juxtaposition of the sexes and their different communication and political styles), More (such as the abolition of intricate laws and other juridical concerns), and Gilman's commentary. It is also clear that the serio-comic pairing of an 'Other' with a recourse to another world (prompted by political issues) is present in both Aristophanes and More; and it also appears in Gilman many centuries later when she uses the political and social matters of her time as the rationale for an escape to a differently organised world. Like the discussions of *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, the analysis below offers a discourse between the ancient and modern world, as it portrays the similarities between ancient political and legal theory and rhetoric, and our time. In this way, it continues to help us trace the development of this strand of Western political thought over the last two thousand years.

At the beginning of the comedy, Lysistrata gathers the women together and announces that the future of all Greece is in their hands. At lines 29-30, she exclaims: οὐτῶ γε λεπτὸν ὥσθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐν ταῖς γυναιξίν ἐστιν ἡ σωτηρία. "So very dainty that the salvation

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<sup>572</sup> This paragraph is drawn from the panel proposal submitted to the CA 2016, 'On Speaking and Not Being Heard: Rhetoric and Political Agency,' in which I presented alongside Sarah Bremner, Niall Livingstone, and Helen Tank. See the bibliography for our respective papers.

of all Greece is actually in the hands of her women.”<sup>573</sup> Shortly after, at line 32, she says: ὡς ἔστ’ ἐν ἡμῖν τῆς πόλεως τὰ πράγματα. “I tell you that the fortunes of the country depend on us.”<sup>574</sup> And, at lines 39-41, she exclaims: ἦν δὲ ξυνέλθωσ’ αἱ γυναῖκες ἐνθάδε αἶ τ’ ἐκ Βοιωτῶν αἶ τε Πελοποννησίων ἡμεῖς τε, κοινῇ σώσομεν τὴν Ἑλλάδα. “But if the wives come together here—those from Boeotia, those of the Peloponnesians, and ourselves—united we’ll save Greece.”<sup>575</sup> The order of the *polis*, *Lysistrata* asserts, depends on its women and it is up to them to unify Greece and to ensure that it has a peaceful future.

The usage of the Greek word *polis* (τῆς πόλεως) in line 32, as Sommerstein also notes, is significant and deserves further analysis.<sup>576</sup> Usually, *polis* is used to describe a city or a city-state, but here, in this context, it is used to refer to Greece as a whole. This becomes clear when looking at lines 40 and 41: αἶ τ’ ἐκ Βοιωτῶν αἶ τε Πελοποννησίων ἡμεῖς τε, κοινῇ σώσομεν τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Aristophanes is certainly not the first who defines *polis* in the sense of country (see, for example, Euripides’ *Ion* 294 or *Bacchae* 58) but, “for a citizen of a particular Greek state to speak of all Greece as her *polis*—and to do so as if this were the most natural thing in the world—must be unique.”<sup>577</sup> The women in *Lysistrata*, then, are not just concerned with internal peace and unity in Athens but also with a more external one that includes Boeotia and the Peloponnese. That is, they are also concerned with a panhellenic unity.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> *Lys.* 29-30.

<sup>574</sup> *Lys.* 32.

<sup>575</sup> *Lys.* 39-41. The theme of salvation comes with the underlying notion of a ‘return to origins’ (the time before warfare), which links to the circular notions seen in *PV*, *Birds*, and the Platonic dialogues.

<sup>576</sup> Sommerstein 1990: 156.

<sup>577</sup> Sommerstein 1990: 156. Cf. Henderson 1988 whose translation of 32 bears similar connotations to those of Sommerstein: “Our country’s fate is henceforth in our hands.”

<sup>578</sup> This longing for a pan-hellenic unity connects to the *oikos*: the women, who are used to maintaining peace within the household, now seek to create peace in a bigger household, which is Greece. (Pan-) Hellenes should not fight because they are all one big family.

A similar appeal to put an end to warfare appears in *Peace* 301-3, performed ten years before *Lysistrata*, when the Chorus Leader says that *all* Greeks should help end the war. See

This notion of a panhellenic reconciliation, and the idea that the women are best suited to achieve it, also appears at line 342 when the second semi-chorus remarks, 'ἀλλὰ πολέμου καὶ μανιῶν ῥυσαμένας Ἑλλάδα καὶ πολίτας' ("...but rather see them rescue Greece and their fellow-citizens from war and madness...") and between lines 495-500 when Lysistrata says to the Proboulos, 'ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς σώσομεν' ("We'll see you safe").<sup>579</sup> It is also hinted at in the following dialogue, where Lysistrata talks about what might happen when the women do not step in to help:<sup>580</sup>

Λυ. ἢ μηκέτ' εἶναι μήτε Πελοποννησίους—

Κα. βέλτιστα τοίνυν μηκέτ' εἶναι νῆ Δία.

Λυ. Βοιωτίους τε πάντας ἐξολωλέναι.

Κα. μὴ δῆτα πάντας γ', ἀλλ' ἄφελε τὰς ἐγγέλεις.

Λυ. περὶ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν δ' οὐκ ἐπιγλωττήσομαι  
τοιοῦτον οὐδέν: ἀλλ' ὑπονόησον σύ μοι.

Lysistrata: Either there will be no more Peloponnesians—

Calonice: Well, that would be splendid, by Zeus, for them to be no more!

Lysistrata: --and the Boeotians will all be utterly destroyed—

Calonice: Oh, please not *all* of them—do make an exception for the eels!

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also lines 296-8, where Trygaeus calls *all* people, ὃ γεωργοὶ κᾶμποροι καὶ τέκτονες καὶ δημιουργοὶ καὶ μέτοικοι καὶ ξένοι καὶ νησιῶται, δεῦρ' ἴτ' ὃ πάντες λεῶ. Hermes draws from this pan-hellenic expression at 435-6, when he exclaims that *all* Greeks should be blessed. The emphasis seems to lie on a general pan-hellenic peace and ideology in *Peace*, which is also reflected by Trygaeus' words at 1080-2, where he says that it is better to make a treaty and rule Greece together than to wage war ceaselessly. This is slightly different from the pan-hellenic unity Lysistrata proposes, which is more rooted in the female domestic sphere rather than anything else, but it is still noteworthy because both plays incorporate a longing for peace in all of Greece and not just Athens.

The model for the Greeks as a loose collective can also be found in the *Iliad*, where Agamemnon, as a leader, should be concerned for the safety of all Greeks. (Unlike Lysistrata, however, he is not).

<sup>579</sup> *Lys.* 342; 495-500.

<sup>580</sup> *Lys.* 33-38.

Lysistrata: I won't utter any words of that kind about Athens, but you can infer my meaning.

These lines suggest that Lysistrata does not want to, even hypothetically and metaphorically, talk about the destruction of Athens. Anxiously, but to a certain extent also patriotically, Lysistrata announces that the women must save Athens from warfare and madness; speaking negatively about this undertaking is not an option.<sup>581</sup> Westlake points out that another reason why Lysistrata avoids talking about the destruction of Athens is because she fears it will be a bad omen if she does.<sup>582</sup> These feelings of fear and anxiety are further emphasized in line 590 when the Proboulos tells Lysistrata to be quiet when she mentions losses of hoplites because he does not want her to bring up bad memories (σίγα, μὴ μνησικακίης).<sup>583</sup>

Lysistrata's very name underlines the point that she sets out to rescue Athens from warfare further. Lewis points out that at the time the play was produced, the position of priestess of Athena Polias—the highest appointment an Athenian woman could hold—was occupied by a woman called Lysimache.<sup>584</sup> This name is strikingly similar to that of Lysistrata, Lysimache meaning 'dissolver of strife' and Lysistrata meaning 'dissolver of armies.'<sup>585</sup> The connection becomes even clearer when looking at line 554 where Lysistrata

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<sup>581</sup> Kanavou 2011: 137 argues that Kalonike's name is also of significance in this passage, especially because she is the first woman whom Lysistrata greets in the play. She asserts, the name "alludes to the 'beautiful victory' that the women's plan is hoped to have, and as it is the first name to be heard in the play, it may be interpreted as an intentional good omen; its message is repeated in the (similarly formed) name Νικοδίκη..." Additionally, she states, "Lysistrata argues that the women's victory will benefit the city, therefore names related to the concept of victory (Kalonike, Nikodike) are also related to φιλόπολις ἀρετή 'patriotism'." Kanavou 2011: 138.

<sup>582</sup> Westlake 1980: 41.

<sup>583</sup> The losses of hoplites are already implied in lines 524-5 where Lysistrata draws attention to the shortage of men in Greece.

<sup>584</sup> Lewis 1955: 4.

<sup>585</sup> Sommerstein 1990: 5.

exclaims: οἴμαι ποτε Λυσιμάχας ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλησι καλεῖσθαι. “I believe that one day we will be known among the Greeks as the Dissolvers of Strife, [or as Lysimachai].”<sup>586</sup>

It is thus appropriate to associate Lysistrata with Lysimache and to link her to the power and wisdom of Athena, the patron goddess of Athens.<sup>587</sup> This in turn evokes the trust and affection felt by Athenians for Athens and, by doing so, may lead the audience to think that Lysistrata is doing the right thing, namely saving Athens in a very Athenian way, with the help of Athena. The notion then falls once again on the rehabilitation of Athens and the reintegration of a Greece that has been torn apart by warfare, as well as on the return (or going back, *πάλιν*) to a more peaceful time. Lewis states likewise: “...Lysistrata is meant to represent the oldest and best elements in Athenian life, which, if properly emphasised, will reject war as the foolish thing that it is.”<sup>588</sup>

All these previously mentioned passages then talk about the reconciliation of Athens (and Greece as a whole), and the war-weariness of the Athenians, and thus echo what I stated at the beginning of this chapter: Athens must be rejuvenated and brought back to its status quo at the end of the play (and thus come full circle), a status that is not affected by warfare, destruction, and the separation of men and women.<sup>589</sup> Lysistrata, linked to the virtues and wisdom of Athena, serves as a spokeswoman for this undertaking and it is because of her efforts that faith in the *polis* is eventually restored.

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<sup>586</sup> *Lys.* 554.

<sup>587</sup> Sommerstein 1990: 5.

<sup>588</sup> Lewis 1955: 3.

<sup>589</sup> Cf. fr.119 Eupolis (*Etymologicum Genuinum* AB), ἀμβλυστονῆσαι καὶ χλοῆσαι τὴν πόλιν (“For the city to spring up and flourish again”).

## I.b. Lysistrata's Discourse of Expertise

Lysistrata's connection with Athena is further underlined by the fact that Lysistrata acts primarily in the name of the patriarchal order and public affairs, and not just for *oikos*-related matters.<sup>590</sup> Unlike Praxagora in *Ecclesiazusae*, who makes her argument for female rule convincing by transforming the *polis* into an *oikos*, Lysistrata wishes to reinforce the established rule. However, the sex strike that takes place in the play derives from the domestic sphere, as do the metaphors that Lysistrata uses when she describes her plan to the men. As Foley points out: "Lysistrata's strategies—the weaving of a cloak and the redirecting of public resources to peaceful purposes—are as appropriate to her public role as priestess as to that of housewife."<sup>591</sup> Indeed, it is the wide range of metaphors that Lysistrata uses in order to exercise her political power that are noteworthy here, for they show that she does have the specialist knowledge to run a city.

Lysistrata's expertise becomes especially clear in her exchange with the Proboulos that Foley refers to in the quotation above. The exchange takes place from lines 486-610 and it is worth looking at it in more detail. In lines 486-7, the Proboulos asks Lysistrata why the

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<sup>590</sup> Cf. Foley 1982: 9-10. "Like Athena, [Lysistrata] may well have been partially armed over her female dress, since at one point she threatens the old men with force of arms if they continue their attack. Like Athena in the *Eumenides*, she invokes *πειθώ* (203) and reason (432, 572, 1124, 1135) as her mental weapons. Like Athena, she serves as the accepted mediator between the sexes (1115-87) and moves them back into harmony, marriage, and a mobilization for non-Greek wars rather than for stasis in the Greek world. Athena, the divine female born from a male, is in her partial masculinity the only possible image of positive female role reversal. She acts for the state, not only in the interests of women and of private family concerns. Like Athena, Lysistrata stands on the side of the public religion of Athens, not for the orgiastic cults that old comic satire tends pejoratively to associate with women." (Note that Foley identifies Lysistrata with Lysimache. See Foley 1982: 8).

<sup>591</sup> Foley 1982: 9.

women shut down the Acropolis in the first place, to which Lysistrata essentially replies: ‘because this is where the money is.’<sup>592</sup>

Πρ. καὶ μὴν αὐτῶν τοῦτ’ ἐπιθυμῶ νῆ τὸν Δία πρῶτα πυθέσθαι,  
ὅ τι βουλόμεναι τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν ἀπεκλήσατε τοῖσι μοχλοῖσιν.

Λυ. ἵνα τὰργύριον σῶν κατέχοιμεν καὶ μὴ πολεμοῖτε δι’ αὐτό.

Proboulos: Well then, this is the first thing, by Zeus, that I’m concerned to learn from them — what was your object in shutting and barring our Acropolis?

Lysistrata: So we could keep the money safe and thereby prevent you from making war.

The Proboulos is puzzled and asks Lysistrata if she thinks it is because of money-related matters that they are at war (διὰ τὰργύριον πολεμοῦμεν γάρ;) to which she replies, ‘yes, and that is also why there was all this other distress, too’ (καὶ τᾶλλα γε πάντ’ ἐκυκήθη). When the Proboulos asks what the women are going to do with the money (ἀλλὰ τί δράσεις;), Lysistrata confidently tells him that they will manage the money from now on (ἡμεῖς ταμειύσομεν αὐτό) because they are so much better at it than the men are. After all, women already manage the household finances for them (οὐ καὶ τᾶνδον χρήματα πάντως ἡμεῖς ταμειύομεν ὑμῖν;).<sup>593</sup> It is

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<sup>592</sup> Cf. Herodotus 5.71, where Cylon attempts a male *coup d’état* by trying to seize the Acropolis with a few other young men. This combination of seizing the Acropolis, like Cylon once did, and going on a sex-strike, is the first of many combinations of male and female politics. Specifically, this initial clash of the male political domain with the domestic one sets in motion the further clashes mentioned in the comedy, which then take place on a linguistic level.

<sup>593</sup> The same argument is put forward at *Stat.* 259b, where the Stranger asks the Young Socrates, τί δέ; μεγάλης σχῆμα οἰκίσεως ἢ μικρᾶς αὖ πόλεως ὄγκος μῶν τι πρὸς ἀρχὴν διοίσετον; (“Well, so far as government is concerned, is there any difference between the grandeur of a large house and the majesty of a small state?”)? The Young Socrates responds, οὐδέν (“No”). As stated in the introduction (cf. p. 15 n. 36), οὐδέις is a particularly emphatic ‘No,’ thus indicating that there really is no difference at all.

this reference to the *oikos* here that is the first of many skilfully employed rhetorical devices by Lysistrata in the scene with the Proboulos.<sup>594</sup>

By specifically referring to the domestic sphere, Lysistrata puts her argument in the reality of everyday Athenian life and shows that the values of the *oikos* can be used to set the *polis* right. Like an Athenian political orator, she aims to convince the Proboulos that she (and all women for that matter) is a good financial adviser by drawing from real Athenian political speeches found, amongst others, in drama, political assemblies, and Platonic dialogues. For instance, she recalls Teiresias in Sophocles' *Antigone* who tells Kreon: εὖ σοι φρονήσας εὖ λέγω. τὸ μανθάνειν δ' ἥδιστον εὖ λέγοντος, εἰ κέρδος λέγοι. "I have considered for your good, and what I advise is good. The sweetest thing is to learn from a good advisor when his advice is to your profit."<sup>595</sup> Similarly to the Proboulos in the comedy, Kreon is not very impressed at first and accuses Teiresias of having taken bribes (κερδαίνειτ', ἐμπολᾶτε τὰπὸ

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Cf. *Prot.* 318e, where Protagoras tells Socrates that if Hippocrates comes to him, he will teach him both how to manage his own home and the affairs of the city. Protagoras does not say that there is no difference between these two managements, but his words at least imply that these skills can be learned at the same time. Cf. Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 7.14-16, where he states that running a household is like running a city, which is, in many ways, a supersized household.

There is also a noteworthy modern parallel for Lysistrata's household metaphor. In 2015, Theano Fotiou, a member of the left-wing party Syriza in Greece, said, during austerity negotiations, that Greek families would survive the fiscal crisis because they know how to make cheap meals out of nothing, such as stuffed peppers. Like Lysistrata's words, Fotiou's were meant to be a compliment to the Greek people, however that intention fell flat because it actually led to crowds protesting on the streets with dishes of stuffed peppers in their hands. (I owe this reference to Ariadne Konstantinou who pointed it out to me at the 'Prometheus, Pandora, Adam and Eve: Archetypes of the Masculine and Feminine and their Reception throughout the Ages' conference at Bar-Ilan University in March 2017).

<sup>594</sup> Equally, if Lysistrata did not manage her household well, this would likely undermine her argument. As Aeschines writes in *Ag. Tim.* 1.30, τὸν γὰρ τὴν ἰδίαν οἰκίαν κακῶς οἰκήσαντα, καὶ τὰ κοινὰ τῆς πόλεως παραπλησίως ἡγήσατο διαθήσειν, καὶ οὐκ ἐδόκει οἷόν τ' εἶναι τῷ νομοθέτῃ τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπον ἰδίᾳ μὲν εἶναι πονηρόν, δημοσίᾳ δὲ χρηστόν. ("For he believed that the man who has mismanaged his own household will handle the affairs of the city in like manner; and to the lawgiver it did not seem possible that the same man could be a rascal in private life, and in public life a good and useful citizen").

<sup>595</sup> *Ant.* 1031-2.

Σάρδεων ἤλεκτρον, εἰ βούλεσθε, καὶ τὸν Ἴνδικὸν χρυσόν).<sup>596</sup> However, like a good orator, Teiresias quickly defends himself and tells Kreon that he is actually well suited to speak in the interest of the *polis*, for he knows how to reason.<sup>597</sup>

Lysistrata does something similar in Aristophanes' play when she makes clear that the comedy is, to a certain extent anyway, about λόγοι and πειθώ—words, speeches, and persuasion.<sup>598</sup> In a dialogue comparable to that of Teiresias and Kreon, and to that of Antigone and Kreon, she and the Proboulos begin to argue over who knows best how to speak in the *polis*' interest. In Lysistrata's opinion, it is she, for she knows how to successfully manage a home.<sup>599</sup> However, the Proboulos is not convinced, for he thinks that household finances and military finances are two different things—one is used to maintain peace within the *oikos*, the other is used to wage war with other city-states and to keep the *polis* safe.<sup>600</sup> He thus believes that Lysistrata's argument is invalid.

Lysistrata, in an attempt to refute the Proboulos' accusation, tells him that the men should not be making war in the first place (ἀλλ' οὐδὲν δεῖ πρῶτον πολεμεῖν) because it is neither profitable nor necessary in order to keep safe. Instead of waging war, the men should rely on the women to keep them safe (ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς σώσομεν). The Proboulos is outraged on

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<sup>596</sup> *Ant.* 1037-9.

<sup>597</sup> *Ant.* 1048-50. This recalls the link between speech and reason, as discussed in the analysis of the Greek ideas of language in chapter 2 (cf. pp. 169-170).

<sup>598</sup> Cf. Ober & Strauss 1990: 263.

<sup>599</sup> Approximately nineteen years later, Praxagora makes a similar point when she says that power should be given to women because “they are, after all, the people to whom we look for the efficient management of our homes” (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς οἰκίαις ταύταις ἐπιτρόποις καὶ ταμίαισι χρώμεθα). See *Eccl.* 210-1. About another thirty years later, Socrates tells Critobulus in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* 3.15 that the increase or impoverishment of the household is not just up to the husband but also to the wife, for it is she who handles the money within in it.

<sup>600</sup> *Lys.* 496-8.

hearing this, seemingly lunatic, proposal and exclaims that Lysistrata has no right to say (and do) these things: νῆ τὴν Δήμητρ' ἄδικόν γε.<sup>601</sup>

However, Lysistrata tells him that he and the fellow men must be saved whether they want to or not.<sup>602</sup> This is yet another exchange in this scene where Lysistrata implies that women do in fact have the intelligence to do the men's job—and not just do it for them, but do it better than them!<sup>603</sup> This becomes even clearer a little later in the play, in lines 1124-27, when Lysistrata addresses the Athenians and Laconians:<sup>604</sup>

ἐγὼ γυνὴ μὲν εἰμι, νοῦς δ' ἔνεστί μοι,  
αὐτὴ δ' ἐμαυτῆς οὐ κακῶς γνώμης ἔχω,  
τοὺς δ' ἐκ πατρός τε καὶ γεραιτέρων λόγους  
πολλοὺς ἀκούσασ' οὐ μεμούσωμαι κακῶς.

I am a woman, but I have got a mind: I am not badly off for intelligence on my own account, and I am not badly educated either, having heard a great deal of the talk of my father and of other older men.

The language that Lysistrata uses here might have reminded the audience of certain passages from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Melanippe the Wise* and thus also of political rhetoric in Athenian tragedy.<sup>605</sup> Especially the first line (ἐγὼ γυνὴ μὲν εἰμι, νοῦς δ' ἔνεστί μοι)

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<sup>601</sup> *Lys.* 500. The fact that the Proboulos invokes Demeter may be significant in terms of how emphatic his response is, because Demeter was often “named in official oaths taken by men, notably that of the jurors.” (Sommerstein 2014: 322. Cf. *Dem.* 24.151). The Proboulos' choice to use Demeter and not, for example Ge (another goddess only men could swear by), may emphasise his point that women really have no place at all in financial and other official business.

<sup>602</sup> *Lys.* 501-3.

<sup>603</sup> There is another modern parallel to this. On 16 August 2008, in an interview with the *Financial Times*, the former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko stated that women are better at taking care of the country than men are. She, too, based her argument on the household and said: “You know how, when a family breaks up, in most instances, the child stays with the mother? She is the more reliable caretaker. It is the same with a country. I simply think that we are more reliable and we are more able to give up living a normal life in order honourably to fulfil our responsibilities.” Cf. Brock 2013: 197.

<sup>604</sup> *Lys.* 1124-7.

<sup>605</sup> Hall 2010b: 30-1.

seems to be a direct quotation from the now fragmentary *Melanippe the Wise* line 482; Melanippe uses it in a speech in defence of women, and in a rebuttal of the opinion men hold about them.<sup>606</sup> Lysistrata, similarly, uses this rhetorical device in order to emphasize her statement that, even though she is a woman, the audience should listen to her.

We see a similar piece of rhetoric being employed by Praxagora a few years later when she addresses the other women and the theatre audience: ἐμοὶ δ' ἴσον μὲν τῆσδε τῆς χώρας μέτα ὅσονπερ ὑμῖν: ἄχθομαι δὲ καὶ φέρω τὰ τῆς πόλεως ἅπαντα βαρέως πράγματα. “I have as much of a stake in this country as you do; and I am vexed and grieved at the whole situation the City is in.”<sup>607</sup> Likewise, in Euripides’ *Children of Heracles*, Macaria, albeit more reserved than Lysistrata and Praxagora, urges her listener to give her a chance, for even though she is a woman, she does have something to say.<sup>608</sup> Additionally, the speech Clytemnestra gives after she has killed Agamemnon also shows similar rhetorical strategies. For she asserts that she is not a weak-minded woman (γυναικὸς ὡς ἀφράσμονος) but instead a woman who killed her husband fearlessly (ἀτρέστῳ καρδίᾳ). (Granted, this is not a positive precedent but it does fit in with the other examples, nonetheless). Likewise, Medea crosses borders in her speech to the chorus in lines 215-70 when she transforms “Corinthian housewives into champions of something like militant feminism, rejoicing in their next ode that women too will now have songs sung of the great deeds (410...).”<sup>609</sup>

This crossing of borders, and use of Athenian rhetoric that is usually reserved for men, can be further explained when looking at Willi’s concept of ‘language loyalty.’<sup>610</sup> Willi writes: “However close-knit women’s social networks are, women may feel little loyalty to

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<sup>606</sup> *Melanippe* fr. 482. For discussions of the fragments of *Melanippe the Wise* and *Melanippe Captive*, see for example Cropp 1995 and Battezzato 2016.

<sup>607</sup> *Eccl.* 173-8.

<sup>608</sup> *Children of Heracles* 474-83.

<sup>609</sup> Pelling 2000: 202.

<sup>610</sup> Willi 2003: 164.

the traditional culture embodied in traditional language. They may expect a real or symbolic bettering of their lives and social positions from the culture that is associated with the new language.”<sup>611</sup> Willi further asserts that the blend of the old and the new language has the ability to represent two codes: a ‘power code’ and a ‘solidarity code.’ The former challenges existing structures and is supported by a socio-economic strength that is not controlled by the community itself, and the latter is meant to enforce a kind of unity, which is regulated by the community, in face of threats from outside.<sup>612</sup> I think the same can be said for *Lysistrata* and the other examples mentioned above: the women’s traditional language, which derives from the *oikos*, enforces a cohesion (as households tend to do) and a shield that is meant to protect from the threats from the world outside. Simultaneously, as seen above, it also challenges these existing structures in a way that is not necessarily supported by the community, as it goes against traditional social norms.<sup>613</sup>

Granted, the cases we are presented with in the plays cited above are different, not only because of their different plotlines, but also because they are different genres and separated by several decades. For example, *Medea*, *Clytemnestra*, *Macaria* and *Melanippe* are limited by the constraints of the tragic genre whereas comedy allows a more authentic utopian exploration by Aristophanes in his characterization of *Lysistrata* when he invokes the image of women as a counter-demos which is meant to mirror the world of the male civic space. (This does raise some interesting questions about the importance of genre in ancient utopian

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<sup>611</sup> Willi 2003: 164.

<sup>612</sup> Willi 2003: 164-5.

<sup>613</sup> Cf. McClure 1999: 27, who refers to this dramatized female speech as ‘bilingualism.’ She writes: “...women can be considered ‘bilingual’ in that they understand both their own discursive strategies and those of the dominant group, engaging in ‘code-switching’ in order to function in societies where they are subordinated.” Cf. Hawkins 2002: 154.

This also emphasises the point made in the passage on the *Statesman*, namely that *Lysistrata* (and *Praxagora*) are able to address different factions at the same time. Cf. pp. 91-2.

thought, such as how dreams of another Golden Age often served as the cornerstone of Old Comedy, but due to the limited space at my disposal these shall remain unexplored here).

Instead, I wish to look at some of the comparisons that can be made between the tragic and the comic genre when it comes to masculine and feminine rhetorical discourse. Especially, *Agamemnon* and *Lysistrata* are worth comparing here, because both plays portray Athenian rhetoric that is utilized by female characters. Like Clytemnestra, *Lysistrata*'s "speech vacillates between gendered subject positions."<sup>614</sup> She is persuasive and eloquent like a man (which is only emphasized by the fact that she learned rhetoric from her father and other older men as indicated in lines 1124-7), but she reformulates male speech by utilizing metaphors from the female domestic sphere.<sup>615</sup>

Her ability to perform both masculine and feminine discourse not only accentuates her connection with Athena once again, who is "in her partial masculinity the only possible image of positive female role reversal,"<sup>616</sup> it also underlines the idea of the male actor impersonating women, and thus a central element of fifth-century Athenian comedy, namely the merging of male and female ideas. In the case of *Lysistrata*, this role reversal becomes particularly evident when *Lysistrata* launches onto the next argument in her political debate with the *Proboulos*. Like *Macaria* and *Melanippe*, she declares that the times when the Athenian

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<sup>614</sup> McClure 1999: 71.

<sup>615</sup> Cf. *Eccl.* 243-4. ἐν ταῖς φυγαῖς μετὰ τὰνδρὸς ὄκησ' ἐν πυκνί: ἔπειτ' ἀκούουσ' ἐξέμαθον τῶν ῥητόρων. "In the refugee time I lived with my husband on the Pnyx; that enabled me to listen to the speakers and learn off their tricks." See also McClure 1999: 239 who notes: "As a fusion of both male and female characteristics and speech practices, *Praxagora*, like *Lysistrata*, mediates between the two realms, first as an exemplar of the tragic actor who rehearses his part and accurately renders the speech of the opposite gender, and later as an accomplished public speaker in the Assembly who seduces 'his' audience with 'his' deceptive speech." Cf. Zweig 1992: 80.

<sup>616</sup> Foley 1982: 9.

women were quiet are over and that they will no longer ignore the bad decisions the men have made in the past.<sup>617</sup>

The Proboulos is, once again, unimpressed and tells Lysistrata that her husband had every right to tell her to keep quiet (ὀρθῶς γε λέγων νῆ Δί' ἐκεῖνος).<sup>618</sup> By doing so, he hints at the common Athenian notion found in many literary texts that women ought to be silent. For example, Sophocles praises female silence in his *Ajax* when he writes: γύνοι, γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγὴ φέρει. “Silence brings adornment to women.”<sup>619</sup> Aristotle seems to quote directly from Sophocles when he remarks: διὸ δεῖ ὥσπερ ὁ ποιητὴς εἶρηκε περὶ γυναικός, οὕτω νομίζειν ἔχειν περὶ πάντων: ‘γυναικὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγὴ φέρει,’ ἀλλ’ ἀνδρὶ οὐκέτι τοῦτο. “All classes must be deemed to have their special attributes; as the poet says of women: ‘Silence is a woman’s glory,’ but this is not equally the glory of man.”<sup>620</sup>

However, Lysistrata decides that it is time to turn the tables and tells the Proboulos that it is now the men’s turn to be quiet. In lines 527-8, she confidently declares: ἦν οὖν ἡμῶν χρηστὰ λεγουσῶν ἐθελήσητ’ ἀντακροῦσθαι κἀντισιωπᾶθ’ ὥσπερ χῆμεῖς, ἐπανορθώσαμεν ἂν ὑμᾶς. “So if you’ll be prepared to listen in your turn to our good advice, and if you’ll keep quiet in your turn as we had to, we can put you back on the right path.” When the Proboulos tries to object, Lysistrata simply says: σιώπα. “Be quiet.” By audaciously declaring that the men ought to be quiet from now on, Lysistrata shatters social norms and poses a threat to the Athenian social and cultural system.<sup>621</sup> As Clytemnestra has done before her, and as

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<sup>617</sup> *Lys.* 507-514. Cf. Apollodorus, *Against Neaera* 112, where Apollodorus (or, pseudo-Demosthenes) draws a picture of the jurors’ wives giving them a hard time if they reach the wrong verdict on Neaera.

<sup>618</sup> *Lys.* 521.

<sup>619</sup> *Ajax* 293. Trans. McClure. See also McClure 1999: 20 and Finglass 2011: 226.

<sup>620</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* 1260a31. See McClure 1999: 20 n. 71 for further examples.

<sup>621</sup> Cf. Konstan 1993: 437. “Women, when left to their own devices, are imagined as creatures of lawless desire, prone to violate the social order which is predicated on the integrity of the individual household.”

Praxagora will do after her, Lysistrata decides to take matters into her own hands upon realizing that the men have failed to conduct political affairs properly. By offering a different style of politics, all three women emerge as intelligent rebels against inadequate male politics and show that they are indeed more than ‘men in drag.’<sup>622</sup> Comparably with Macaria and Melanippe, they epitomize the juxtaposition of female powerlessness in Athens and female confidence on stage.

The similarities to the tragic texts in this exchange suggest that Lysistrata’s political discourse with the Proboulos is not just a comic inversion of male and female roles, but also a discussion of rhetoric itself. Similarly to Sophocles, Aristophanes takes for granted his audience’s familiarity with political and philosophical rhetoric, and by doing so follows an oratorical paradigm that the audience would have recognised from drama and political assemblies, and also from philosophical discourse.<sup>623</sup>

This becomes also clear in the next part of the dialogue when Lysistrata explains to the Proboulos how exactly the women are going to put an end to the ostensibly pointless current political affairs.<sup>624</sup>

ὥσπερ κλωστήρ’, ὅταν ἡμῖν ἦ τεταραγμένος, ὧδε λαβοῦσαι,  
ὕπενεγκοῦσαι τοῖσιν ἀτράκτοις τὸ μὲν ἐνταυθοῖ τὸ δ’ ἐκεῖσε,  
οὕτω καὶ τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτον διαλύσομεν, ἢν τις ἐάσῃ,  
διενεγκοῦσαι διὰ πρεσβειῶν τὸ μὲν ἐνταυθοῖ τὸ δ’ ἐκεῖσε.

It’s like when we have a tangled skein of wool. We take it, like this, and pull it gently with the help of our spindles, now this way and now that. That’s how we’ll unravel this war, if we’re allowed to, sorting it out by sending embassies, now this way and now that.

In this scene, Lysistrata not only sounds like a character from a Platonic dialogue by explaining political matters with the help of a wool-allegory, but also like Athena Ergane, the

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<sup>622</sup> Cf. Mossman 2001: 382.

<sup>623</sup> Ober & Strauss 1990: 259. Cf. Willi 2002: 135-39; 149-50.

<sup>624</sup> *Lys.* 568-570.

patron deity of craftsmen and artists. Not only does this underscore her domestic activities (and, by using *διαλύω*, also the etymology of her name), it is also another example of how Lysistrata stands on the side of public religion in Athens, and thus close to the heart of the *polis*.

Moreover, the choice of metaphor is significant here, because it links back to the juxtaposition of feminine and masculine discourse mentioned earlier: Lysistrata takes women's work that has to do with wool and spindles and transforms it into eloquence. On the one hand, this relates to a statement made earlier: Lysistrata uses arguments that derive from the domestic sphere in order to bring her point across because that is what she knows best.<sup>625</sup> On the other hand, it also shows how Aristophanes gives voice to Lysistrata through both women's work and male political rhetoric. Not only does this play with the comic topsy-turvy idea of women in power in that Aristophanes takes a domestic element and applies it to the public domain of the male, it also highlights an element of Lysistrata's speech that is quite different from the tragic passages quoted earlier. For while those passages portray the worst thing that Athenian female eloquence can do (undermine men), Lysistrata's rhetoric is ultimately used to help the men.<sup>626</sup>

Nevertheless, the *Probulos* is once again not convinced and demands further explanation of how exactly the women intend to handle the men's affairs (*πῶς δὲ; φέρ' ἴδω*).<sup>627</sup> This is when Lysistrata provides another simile: she utilizes a raw fleece as a

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<sup>625</sup> This recalls Philomela, who weaves to tell the story of her rape and glossectomy, and of Penelope who weaves and unravels wool in order to delay her marriage to another man. See also Karanika 2014, especially pp. 82-88.

<sup>626</sup> See also Lane 1998: 166. "Throughout the passage and the play, the domestic agility of women is celebrated and mockingly compared with the public incompetence of men...The humour of the passage as well as its polemical point depends heavily on this clear gender identification of weaving with women – precisely because Lysistrata is in fact proposing this model of civic weaving as an appropriate model for the men."

<sup>627</sup> *Lys.* 573.

metaphor and makes clear that Athenian politics must be cleansed from dirt, villains, and tyrants. Once that it is done, a union of Athenians, immigrants, foreigners, and anyone who opposes tyranny, must be formed (just as it is necessary to place the wool back into the work-basket together with other pieces of wool after it has been cleaned). Returning to the panhellenic concept mentioned at the beginning of the play, *Lysistrata* then asserts that all the colonies must become part of this union in order to assure peace and an effective political system. This is just like smaller pieces of wool that must be added together in order to make a warm cloak.<sup>628</sup>

It is clear that this allegory is packed with metaphors that resemble philosophical discourse. First of all, it is important to note that it points to the essential thing the comedy attempts to do, namely renewing Athens and returning (πάλιν) to a peaceful time. This becomes clear when looking at the ‘cleansing’ aspect of it. For *Lysistrata* does not take a new piece of wool but an old one (i.e. Athens) that she wishes to clear from dirt (i.e. from the bad influence of certain people) and join together with other pieces of wool (i.e. other Greek city-states). This allows us to construct a clear view of what the play is doing with the mythical idea of women in power who attempt to save the *polis*. For once again we are presented with oratory from the *oikos* that is used to fix problems created by men.

Secondly, it is worth pointing out that a similar weaving-analogy appears in Plato’s *Statesman*. In the text, the Stranger applies the art of weaving to the statesman and asserts that the universal science of statesmanship knows how to weave everything that is within a state into a unified fabric.<sup>629</sup> He bases the necessity of this on two opposing temperaments of men: courage and moderation. If those who are too courageous dominate the state, this will result in a policy that is too aggressive; similarly, if those who are too moderate dominate the state,

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<sup>628</sup> *Lys.* 574-586.

<sup>629</sup> *Stat.* 305e.

this will result in aggression against themselves.<sup>630</sup> Thus, just as it is Lysistrata's task in the comedy to weave opposing elements together, it is the task of the statesman to weave citizens with these conflicting temperaments into a unified social fabric.<sup>631</sup>

The statesman achieves this by providing both divine and human bonds for the souls of the citizens. The divine bond is created by implementing in men's souls a correct opinion of what is just and good, and the human bond is created by the intermarriage of men and women, as their offspring will naturally have a balanced mixture of the two opposing elements.<sup>632</sup> This is similar to *Lysistrata*, for at the end of the comedy, we are presented with a synthesis of divine and human elements. The divine principle is Athena, upon whose power and wisdom Lysistrata calls, and the human one is the reconciliation between men and women. Both Lysistrata and the statesman then weave together different people and temperaments in order to create a unified and harmonious society.<sup>633</sup>

Finally, it is worthwhile comparing this piece of rhetoric with Plato's ship of state mentioned at 488a-489 in Book VI of the *Republic*. Let us briefly summarize the parable: the image there is a ship, and the owner of it is stronger than everyone else on board. However, despite his strength, he can neither hear nor see very well nor does he actually have much experience with seafaring. The sailors are in a constant fight about who should steer the ship, each of them thinking they are the best suited for the job. (This is despite the fact that none of them has actually ever learned how to steer a ship since they claim that it is not teachable). If they do not succeed in grabbing the rudder from someone else, they execute the one who does. Afterwards, they drug the shipowner so that they can steer the ship and call themselves

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<sup>630</sup> *Stat.* 307a-8b.

<sup>631</sup> Hall 1981: 84.

<sup>632</sup> *Stat.* 309c-310b.

<sup>633</sup> See Cornford 1934: 60, who asserts that the reunion of men and women at the end of the play "is itself a sort of re-marriage."

‘navigator;’ anyone else is dismissed as useless. The parable ends with the assertion that these sailors do not realise that the art of navigation is a craft that must be learned in order to do it successfully. For at the end of the day, it is not just about the ship itself but also about the things that may influence the navigation of it, such as the seasons or the winds.

Similarly to Lysistrata’s wool-basket allegory, the connotations of this parable are clear. The captain (i.e. the demos) is slow-witted and unable to see how things really are, and the sailors (i.e. the politicians) are in a constant fight over who should control the ship (i.e. the *polis*) but are ultimately only interested in themselves. Both demos and politicians are unable to recognise a true captain; one who actually realizes that one must also pay attention to things outside the ship in order to navigate it successfully. Moreover, the ship-of-state simile hints at a problem encountered by Lysistrata in her dialogue with the Proboulos. Monoson states:<sup>634</sup>

The parable...suggests a predicament that all the people on the boat share. How is a navigator to demonstrate the importance of his skill, short of being given the opportunity to practice it? The abstract nature of his knowledge makes it difficult for him to convey to the captain and crew that he indeed knows something relevant.

Lysistrata, too, despite her eloquence, has problems getting her point across to the Proboulos, for he neither understands the metaphors she uses nor how women play a part in warfare. The former has already become clear on the previous pages, and the latter is exemplified by the Proboulos’ statement following Lysistrata’s allegory: οὔκουv δεινὸν ταυτὶ ταύτας ῥαβδίξειν καὶ τολυπεύειν, αἷς οὐδὲ μετῆν πάνυ τοῦ πολέμου; “It really is disgraceful that these women should go on like this about sticks and balls, when they’ve had absolutely no part in the war.”<sup>635</sup> Lysistrata responds by saying that women do actually know something about war

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<sup>634</sup> Monoson 2000: 121.

<sup>635</sup> *Lys.* 586.

because of the losses of sons and husbands that are associated with it.<sup>636</sup> But again, the Proboulos does not understand her, for the abstract nature of Lysistrata's domestic argument makes it difficult for him to follow it.

The Proboulos' inability to understand Lysistrata underlines many notions found in the comedy: (1) it portrays the opposition of the sexes and the imbalance that is created by it: the *polis* and *oikos* are separated and cannot properly communicate with one another; (2) it serves as a comic element, as the debate between the Proboulos and Lysistrata emerges as a parody of real masculine political behaviour: politicians talk to (and at) one another but are not really being heard by the other party; (3) similarly, even though Lysistrata is able to speak 'like a man', she is still not being heard, for she uses metaphors that are outside the Proboulos' realm of knowledge. As Hawkins puts it: "This [domestic language] is a language in which most men would not be fluent since it does not normally enter into the male world."<sup>637</sup>

The emphasis is on 'normally' here because things are different in Plato, where the weaving metaphor is invoked frequently to discuss issues related to the state. Nonetheless, Hawkins' point does recall female powerlessness in Athens and the limits placed on women in the domestic sphere, and it also brings to mind the differences between male and female speech. (4) However, the scene also shows the (rhetorical) freedom female characters have on the Greek stage, for Lysistrata continually counters the Proboulos' objections and does not keep quiet. She argues relentlessly that the Athenian men are destroying the *polis* through warfare, and she seeks a peaceful solution.

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<sup>636</sup> *Lys.* 587-598.

<sup>637</sup> Hawkins 2002: 157. Again, the underlines the point made in the section on the *Statesman* (cf. pp. 91-2). Lysistrata and Praxagora manage to engage with different factions on a rhetorical level, but ultimately only Praxagora is truly successful because Lysistrata does not manage to get the Proboulos to understand her.

Their exchange eventually ends with the Proboulos leaving the stage in line 610, feeling utterly insulted, saying that he does not deserve to be treated like this. He is angry at Lysistrata and her speech, though not necessarily at the politicians (or the demos) who caused the problems *Lysistrata* mentions in the first place. Like the Athenian demos, the Proboulos prefers compliments to criticism, and like the sailors in Plato's ship-of-state parable, he attempts to deny Lysistrata the demonstration of the importance of her skill. In this way then, while certainly ensuring comic laughter, the dialogue also serves as a reminder (and perhaps even warning) to the audience that they are responsible for recognising the intentions of a speaker and for taking action when necessary.<sup>638</sup> This is similar to the issue that Aristophanes deals with in *Knights*, namely the denial of rights to well-intentioned orators. Instead, they are being given to self-serving ones (Cleon) who aim to undermine the *polis* from within.

Of course, in the true spirit of Aristophanic comedy, Lysistrata's argument is ultimately successful, as the comedy ends on a triumphant note. Nevertheless, the scene with the Proboulos still raises certain issues that were very real worries for Aristophanes' contemporaries. The Proboulos has, arguably, been corrupted by flattering rhetoric and thus refuses to listen to Lysistrata, making it difficult for her to be heard. He fails to recognise the intentions of Lysistrata and does not realise that she acts for the good of the *polis*. Thus, while this topsy-turvy world is certainly very much at home in Aristophanes, it also echoes real problems off stage, as it portrays the Proboulos, who as an Athenian is supposed to be the master of *logos*, as acting in contrast to his own ideals.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> This brings to mind the behaviour of the courageous birds and animals discussed in chapter 2, as they take a step in the right direction and attempt to overthrow the tyrannical regime. Cf. pp. 184-8; 201-4.

<sup>639</sup> At the same time, as shown in the discussions of the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras* (cf. pp. 89-91 and 104), this undertaking is exceptionally difficult, and the blame does not lie solely with the Proboulos because it is not necessarily possible for him to learn the language of a different (i.e. Lysistrata's) faction.

At the same time, as discussed above, we are also presented with a merging of masculine and feminine rhetoric. Lysistrata appears as a mediator that speaks on behalf of the city in order to end warfare and to guide the male and female back into harmony. By making use of specific metaphors (that stem from the realms of both women and men), Lysistrata shows that it is time to reaffirm Athens and to unify all Greek city-states. By doing so, she not only reiterates the panhellenic notion mentioned in the first few lines of the play, but she also asserts that it is time to join the *oikos* and the *polis* back together, for only then can the existing (military) conditions be brought to an end.

Finally, it is worth noting that, by portraying the women as a group of people who engage in political action in order to stop warfare, Aristophanes a) draws up an alternative public that shows women with their own state institutions, and b) he makes use of the comic motif where men fear that women plot against them in secret meetings. This becomes further evident in lines 1128-1135 of *Lysistrata*, where Lysistrata refers to the common sacrifices of Athenians and Spartans in order to underline her argument that reconciliation is necessary. By mentioning common festivals in this context, she not only merges religious, civic, and military elements but she also represents the women gathering on top of the Acropolis as an alternate demos with their own *nomoi* and politics. This idea is developed further in *Thesmophoriazusae* where a women's festival is imagined as an assembly.<sup>640</sup>

## II. The purpose of Lysistrata's speech

Aristophanes, through the characters of Lysistrata and the Proboulos, refers to the demos' inability to identify a leader (and orator) with good intentions. This latent criticism of

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<sup>640</sup> See especially lines 295-310 of *Thesmophoriazusae* and also Konstan 1993: 439.

the demos not only recalls the connotations of the texts discussed in chapter 2, but it also brings to mind a scene from *Knights*, performed a little over ten years before *Lysistrata*. In lines 1355-1357, the following exchange takes place between the demos and the Sausage-Seller:

Δῆ. αἰσχύνομαί τοι ταῖς πρότερον ἁμαρτίαις.

Ἄλ. ἀλλ' οὐ σὺ τούτων αἴτιος--μὴ φροντίσης--  
ἀλλ' οἷ σε ταῦτ' ἐξηπάτων.

Demos: You know, I am really ashamed of my former errors.

Sausage-Seller: But you weren't to blame for them – don't you worry – it was the men who practised these deceptions on you.

Here, the Sausage-Seller tells the demos that it is not their fault that they have chosen an inadequate leader; rather, it is the leader's fault, for it is he who has deceived the demos with unsound arguments. (This, as has been shown, is the same problem that appears in *Birds* ten years later, when most of the birds are deceived by Peisetaerus' and Tereus' oratorical skills).

Certainly, Aristophanes is walking a fine line by including these implications (and accusations) in his plays. He cannot very well assert in front of the Athenian audience that the entire demos is inept (although he does come close in *Knights*) and that that is why they choose inept leaders; no one who appears before the demos – be it playwright, comic hero, or orator – can afford to do so.<sup>641</sup> As Henderson points out: “anyone...who for any reason

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<sup>641</sup> There are quite a few testimonia and passages in (fragmented) plays, which say that Cleon attacked Aristophanes for ridiculing him in his comedies. See, for example, *Ach.* 377-82 and 502-3, and *Wasps* 1284-91. More importantly, the Scholium on Aelius Aristides *Or.* 3.8 states: κατηγορήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Κλέωνος Ἀριστοφάνους ὕβρεως, ἐτέθη νόμος μηκέτι ἐξεῖναι κωμῶδεῖν ὀνομασί. (“After Cleon had accused Ar. of hybris, a law was passed forbidding further comic ridicule of anyone by name”). The Scholium on *Ach.* 378 notes that Cleon did take Aristophanes to court because of the insults he hurled against him in *Babylonians*.

However, it is necessary to note that these testimonia and fragments are not conclusive. Halliwell 1998: xlv n. 46 asserts, “to treat [Dikaipolis' defence speech in *Arch.*] as

admonished the collectivity of citizens had to persuade its members that he was still somehow in conformity with collective norms and with the democratic notion that collective norms must always control decision-making.”<sup>642</sup>

Hence the pedagogical approach via satire. Rather than outright attacking the demos (and risking punishment), Aristophanes educates them by ridiculing (which again links him to Lucian and More, and their serio-comic approaches). As Loraux writes:<sup>643</sup>

...one still has to get oneself heard by this Demos that prefers unconditional praise to lessons in morality. Because laughter, which frees from fascination, is the most effective weapon of criticism, the comic poet has no other strategy than to educate by ridiculing. One must make the Athenians laugh at the praise that they are so happy to address to the city and the democratic system...

In *Lysistrata*, this is highlighted not only by the dialogue but also by the panhellenic (and thus collective) nature of the comedy. In this sense, *Lysistrata*'s comic speech is not really political – neither in context nor in ethos – but instead a lesson in (and reminder of) morality, as it functions as a means for the expression of the collectivity of the demos.<sup>644</sup> Aristophanes thus again emerges as a political satirist (as he does in *Birds*) and once again, comparably with Orwell, exposes false beliefs engendered by λόγοι and πειθώ.

In order to avoid unnecessary problems, he does so by appealing to the intelligence and integrity of the demos, which is one of the reasons why we are presented with a sense of reassurance in *Lysistrata*. By presenting to the audience a celebratory image not only of

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programmatically of the author's own stance, as has often been done, is to tear it out of the context of parody and metatheatre in which it is teasingly embedded.” Likewise, Rosen 2010: 235 argues: “The problem of interpreting the allegations of a historical quarrel between Cleon and Aristophanes is particularly interesting because it is so easy to see the story—whatever its basis in historical fact—as part of the poet's attempt to create a specifically *literary* persona for himself, a gesture that need not always have any basis in truth.” Rosen, however, does not seem to doubt that there was some sort of disagreement between Aristophanes and Cleon to which Aristophanes alludes in his plays. See Rosen 1988: 78.

<sup>642</sup> Henderson 1993: 309.

<sup>643</sup> Loraux 1986: 306.

<sup>644</sup> Cf. Henderson 1993: 318.

Athens but also of themselves, Aristophanes cultivates an affirmation of both the *polis* and the demos' intelligence, thereby saying that they can do better. The strong Athenian nature of the comedy allows the audience to reflect on their Athenian heritage and virtues; and with the inclusion of a representation of Athena Polias, they are even provided with a blast from the past and reminded of the early stages of the *polis* when Athena was chosen to be their patron.<sup>645</sup> In this sense, the comic poet presents to the audience not only a dismantled polity that is in need of renewed strength, but he also offers them a sense of encouragement for themselves – which then links to the point made in the *Protagoras*, namely that political excellence is a social achievement which is based on universal competence and opportunity.<sup>646</sup>

Aristophanes then brings *Lysistrata* – and the fictive world of comedy – into the political realm of Athens by satirically re-endorsing it through contrast and inversion. More importantly, like a true satirist, Aristophanes ends the play on a latent critical note when this endorsement becomes once again the weapon of criticism.<sup>647</sup> For while the ending does bring about the desired restoration of normality, the characters fail to realise that it is normality that caused the problems of the play in the first place. Similarly, in *Birds*, Peisetaerus and Euelpides leave Athens in order to find a better life outside the city, only to discover that the only real possibility is to live within a *polis*, with all its discords and injustices. Neither they, nor the characters in *Lysistrata*, can escape the status quo; instead they find themselves

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<sup>645</sup> Again, this links to the interpretation of the word *πάλιν*, albeit this time more positively. Cf. pp. 86-7.

<sup>646</sup> Cf. pp. 102-3, with n. 278. Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Declamations* 16.9. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ ὑφορώμενοι καὶ δεδιότες τὸν δῆμον ὡς δεσπότην ἐθώπευον, ἡρέμα δάκνοντες καὶ μετὰ γέλωτος, ὥσπερ αἱ τίθται τοῖς παιδίοις, ὅταν δέη τι τῶν ἀηδεστέρων πιεῖν αὐτά, προσφέρουσι μέλιτι χρίσασαι τὴν κύλικα. (“For the comic poets, being suspicious and fearful of the people, flattered them as a slave flatters a master, chiding them gently and with a smile, as nurses will do with children when they must give them something unpleasant to drink and put honey on the rim of the cup”).

<sup>647</sup> Cf. Loraux 1986: 307.

subjects to the same cycles of recurrent political events discussed throughout this thesis. This, then, is almost a lesson in morality in itself and thus also an affirmation that, comparably with the endings of *PV*, *Birds*, the Platonic dialogues, and the moral of Plato's ship of state parable, we always seem to end up right where we started.<sup>648</sup>

### III. Lysistrata's speech in relation to *Gorgias* and *Birds*

In the analysis of the *Gorgias* and the *Encomium of Helen*, I noted that part of the larger picture that is being portrayed is not only the critique of rhetoric but also the powers and limitations thereof. Especially, *Helen* is worth briefly revisiting here because it is, to a certain extent, also about who you are and who you say you are, and about whether others are able to know whether you speak the truth.

This is complicated, because according to *Gorgias*, both sight and sound have the power to manipulate and mould the mind in whatever way they wish.<sup>649</sup> This is why, as Haden also notes, speech is not subject to an objective reality but is itself an independent agent.<sup>650</sup> Or, as Clements puts it, "according to this model of perception...each one of us is fundamentally at the mercy of what we see and hear."<sup>651</sup> *Gorgias* exemplifies this in *Helen* where he justifies Helen's actions by stating that a) the sight of Paris overwhelmed her soul,

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<sup>648</sup> This also implies that Lysistrata's idea of the status quo is more imagined than real, because it does not really bring about the peace and restoration that she desires.

<sup>649</sup> 82B11.11, 13 DK. Cf. p. 68; p. 75 n. 193; p. 76 n. 196.

<sup>650</sup> Haden 1992: 320. Cf. Versényi 1963: 45, who writes that *Gorgias* argues that *logos* "might have nothing to do with knowledge, intellect, reason, but move in an altogether different realm."

<sup>651</sup> Clements 2014: 186.

and b) she came under the influence of speech against her will; she thus had no choice but to leave with Paris and cannot be blamed for the complications that ensued with her leaving.<sup>652</sup>

Gorgias, comparably with the Sausage-Seller in Aristophanes' *Knights*, who blames the leader for deceiving the demos with illogical arguments, implies that it is the people who are the real victims here. For it is they who have to experience both sights and sounds in a passive manner, as they are separated from an objective reality. This is only exacerbated by the problems encountered in the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras*, which show that different groups often genuinely struggle to understand the speech of the other group, and that the art (and knowledge) of measuring words is no easy undertaking. While this implies that the demos, like Helen, cannot be blamed for their actions, it does make progressive political change, which depends on the ability of the demos to understand what is being said, difficult.<sup>653</sup>

This is especially significant when relating it to the scene between Lysistrata and the Proboulos, because it suggests that there are no accessible epistemological grounds on which the Proboulos can assess the truth and value of Lysistrata's words. In addition to the reasons mentioned earlier (cf. pp. 228-9) that explain his inability to understand her (i.e. his inability

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<sup>652</sup> DK 82B11-12 and DK 82B15. This is opposite to the case seen in *PV*, when Prometheus tells Zeus, as noted earlier (cf. p. 68), that even his charming rhetoric will not save him from his fall.

This is not to say that Gorgias necessarily cared about Helen. See Versényi 1963: 43-4, who argues, while "the work is designed to show that the causes of her disaffection were beyond her control, and to vindicate her honor...there is no reason to suppose that Gorgias cared much whether Helen was vindicated or not, and Helen is obviously merely a pretext for his argument." See also Robinson 1973: 53. Gorgias' (potentially) ambiguous intentions in writing the encomium are further underlined by the ending he chose for the text: ἐβουλήθη γράψαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ παίγνιον. This may relate to the serio-comic nature of More's *Utopia* and its subtitle, 'A Truly Golden Handbook, No Less Beneficial than Entertaining.'

<sup>653</sup> This is also why Zeus, in the myth of the last judgment in *Gorgias* 523d-e, asserts that trials should be held 'naked' with everyone's soul exposed, because only then can a fair judgment be made.

links to the opposition of the sexes; it emerges as a parody of real masculine political demeanour; and it recalls female powerlessness in Athens), the following can be added to the list: the Proboulos cannot judge the legitimacy of Lysistrata's words because he does not know whether what he hears and sees is true. This is why he fails to understand her argument. As noted previously, this is one of the underlying notions of their dialogue: the demos is simply not capable of recognising a leader who means well. On the one hand, this is because they are easily deceived by flattering rhetoric; on the other hand, it is because of the Gorgianic model of perception and the Platonic problem of political comprehension: they ultimately fall victim to the passivity and limitations of sight and sound, which prevents them from understanding words in a way that actually reflects their underlying meaning.<sup>654</sup>

Gorgias' and Plato's troubles then, applied to *Lysistrata*, are yet another reminder that the audience must return to their senses and see political speech for what it really is. It is clear that the spectacle of speech that Aristophanes creates in the dialogue between Lysistrata and the Proboulos, links not only to political speeches off stage, but also creates something that can be linked to the rhetorical problems discussed in the first and second chapter.<sup>655</sup> The birds especially, seem to be prime examples of the Gorgianic model of perception. They listen to any *logos* (whether it is Tereus' or Peisetaerus') and are moulded by its message. At the same

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<sup>654</sup> In a way, this also foreshadows certain events that would happen later on in the year. As Thucydides writes at 8.66, soon after the Lenaea, Peisander and Athenian *hetaireiai* conspired against democracy and subjected the city to a reign of terror. No one dared to speak against them and the once-active demos had become passive for fear of being subject to violence. The situation was only exacerbated by the fact that appearances could not be trusted. It was not always clear who was (or was not) complicit in the conspiracy. Similarly, the discourse between Lysistrata and the Proboulos is characterized by suspicion (the Proboulos is not sure about Lysistrata's motives), secrecy (he fears the women have met in secret to plot against the men) and a general lack of trust. See also Clements 2014: 188-9, and *Prot.* 356d-e, where Socrates talks about the dangerous power of appearance.

<sup>655</sup> Cf. the passage on the Mytilenian Debate in Thuc. 3.38, when Cleon scolds the Athenian for taking pleasure in the spectacles of fine speeches that are only about what sounds good and what looks good but not about what actually is good.

time, their ability to participate actively in political decision-making slowly vanishes (although some of them do try, as I have demonstrated), and they are left at the mercy of whatever Tereus and Peisetaerus tell them. This suggests once again that, despite the fact that most of the birds are bird-brained, they are not necessarily to blame for their fate because it is Tereus and Peisetaerus, the persuaders, who really commit the wrongdoing here.

Consequently, the *Helen*, as well as the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras*, helps us make the following argument clearer: Aristophanes is concerned with teaching the demos the political (and often quite tragic) deception of speeches. Like *Birds* and the Platonic dialogues (and like Plato's ship-of-state parable and Orwell's *Animal Farm*), *Lysistrata* demonstrates to the audience that they must see the true meaning behind rhetoric. In *Birds*, this is done by portraying animals that are deceived by arguments that appear to be valid but ultimately result in death; and in *Lysistrata*, it is done by portraying a character who cannot identify a valid argument and rather chooses the destructive status quo.<sup>656</sup> Once again then, Aristophanes emerges as a poet who satirically unpacks systems of political thought and speech and who appeals to the audience, saying they should do better than this.<sup>657</sup>

#### IV. *Ecclesiazusae*

It is clear that the comic idea of the rule of women is present in *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, and presumably also in other lost plays by Aristophanes and his

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<sup>656</sup> Something similar happens in *Clouds* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. As Clements writes: "Both [comedies]...show us an Aristophanes explicitly concerned with the disfigurement of democratic discourse by arguments that appear to be valid but harmfully deceive or result in error, and with answering the threat posed to the proper instruction of the *demos* by those who would promulgate them." See Clements 2014: 183-4.

<sup>657</sup> This is also evident in *Acharnians*, performed in 425 B.C., where the Chorus refer to Aristophanes as someone who has stopped the demos from being deceived by foreigners' speeches and from being persuaded by their flattery. See *Ach.* 633-41.

contemporaries.<sup>658</sup> *Lysistrata* draws parallels between military and household finances, the dialogue between Lysistrata and the Proboulos recalls political speeches found off stage; and *Thesmophoriazusae* envisions a women's religious festival that corresponds to male political institutions in Athens. However, in both plays, the rule of women is ephemeral and everything goes back to normal in the end, thus echoing the idea of recurrence that shines through this chapter. Additionally, both comedies portray crises that are very specific: *Lysistrata* seizes a polis that is debilitated by warfare, and Critylla and the other women reprimand Euripides for representing them in a bad light in his tragedies. In *Ecclesiazusae*, on the other hand, performed approximately nineteen years after *Lysistrata*, we are presented with a different, more radical, case. Not only is the change in leadership permanent but the initial predicament is also less specific: Praxagora primarily rallies the women because she believes that the demos keeps electing bad leaders who abuse the law for selfish reasons.<sup>659</sup>

The rationale for the new regime is the misuse of existing laws, which is why Praxagora decides to abolish courts and legal processes, and to hand over the rule to the women. She promises a world that Peisetaerus and Euelpides seek to find in *Birds*, and that More establishes years later in *Utopia*, namely a world that is free from the complexities of lawsuits, debts, and litigiousness. Praxagora begins this undertaking by submitting a decree to the Athenian legislative assembly, and it is here where it becomes clear that the legal language, while already present in *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, is taken to a whole

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<sup>658</sup> For instance, Theopompos' *Stratitoidai* seems to have portrayed women serving as soldiers and Pherekrates' *Tyrannis* suggests a plot similar to the one we see in *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*: the fragments imply that women have turned the tables on the men and that they are seen as the saviours of Athens. See Henderson 2000: 142.

<sup>659</sup> *Eccl.* 176-8.

different level in *Ecclesiazusae*.<sup>660</sup> Additionally, the audience is presented with a scenario that is contrary to the one seen in *Thesmophoriazusae*, where a man dresses up as a woman and infiltrates a female space. Now, we have women disguise themselves as men in order to gain access to a male space.

The women's infiltration of the male legal sphere is important because it calls into question the legality of their decree; for an assembly which consists mainly of women disguised as men is not the most legitimate assembly. There is certainly an argument to be made that the women's decree is procedurally correct (which I will make later on in this chapter), and yet there is also a kind of uncertainty to it, and it is this uncertainty that allows us to investigate further some of the fundamental questions about the use of law in Aristophanic comedy, already touched upon in our discussion of *Birds*. For *Ecclesiazusae* clearly plays with the juridical logic of late fifth-century and early fourth-century Athens, and it exhibits a portrayal of an ambiguous decree that recalls the suspicious law-making of *Birds*. In the following sections, I will investigate this juridical logic by looking at a) Praxagora's political and legal rhetoric, and b) the changes that were made to the Athenian legal system in late fifth-century Athens, which show how the women's decree might just work, at least in theory.

## V. Praxagora's Political and Legal Rhetoric

Despite the questionable legality of the women's *coup d'état*, and despite the fact that it is more radical and more permanent than the one seen in *Lysistrata*, the language Praxagora uses in the assembly recalls the language Lysistrata uses in her exchange with the Proboulos.

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<sup>660</sup> Cf. Fletcher 2012: 130, who writes: "the humour of women taking control in *Lysistrata* and using the language of law-making, a minor joke in *Thesmophoriazusae*, extends to its fullest capacity in *Ecclesiazusae*."

For, similarly to *Lysistrata*, Praxagora employs metaphors in a political context in order to demonstrate that women do have the knowledge of how to run a city. She too builds her argument on women's areas of expertise (e.g. household finances, weaving, food, wine, and sex), and she uses these Athenian female virtues in order to a) attack the politics perpetuated by men, and b) propose an alternative way of running the polis. Like *Lysistrata*, Praxagora is depicted as a clever and persuasive political orator who makes clear that women have just as much to say about the current political situation in Athens than the men.

Moreover, like *Lysistrata*, Praxagora mediates between the realms of female and male discourse and, comparably with Clytemnestra and other tragic characters, she serves as an example of the actor who accomplishes the speech of the opposite gender. In Praxagora's case, this is only accentuated by both the fact that she achieves the appropriation of male political discourse right at the beginning of *Ecclesiazusae*, and by the etymology of her name, 'one who is active in the agora.' Both the appropriation of male speech and Praxagora's name stress the similarities between the theatre of Dionysus and the assembly, and they point at the status of male speech in Athens, for they show the potential dangers that can arise when the art of persuasion is used by leaders with a suspicious agenda.<sup>661</sup>

Additionally, as is the case in *Lysistrata*, the female adaptation of male political discourse sets in motion the disturbance of the conventional hierarchy in *Ecclesiazusae*, and it provides Aristophanes "with a vehicle for illustrating the disastrous consequences of political power placed in the wrong hands."<sup>662</sup> However, unlike *Lysistrata*, Praxagora's rhetoric is ultimately less convincing. She never actually says how she intends to save Athens, and towards the end of her speech in the Assembly, she merely provides an array of empty rhetoric that underlines the dubiousness of her proposed government.

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<sup>661</sup> Cf. McClure 1999: 264.

<sup>662</sup> McClure 1999: 264. It is clear that Praxagora joins Peisetaerus here.

Before we look at Praxagora's legal and political rhetoric in more detail, we must briefly discuss the stolen cloaks which the women use to sneak into Assembly. It is clear that in order for their *coup d'état* to be successful, they must look like men, act like men, and speak like men.<sup>663</sup> Much has been written on this kind of cross-dressing (especially on the fact that we deal with men playing women impersonating men), and the sexual inversion and infertility of the Athenian men that ultimately result from it).<sup>664</sup> However, for this section, one of the more important points is the following: the women's proposed regime is not defined by their transformation into men (which is, after all, only temporary, and merely a key to get into the assembly) but by the fundamental change of Athens' nature. The *polis* becomes an *oikos* and lawsuits and politics are swapped for clothing, food, and sex. Existing law and legal action are eliminated, and courtrooms are converted into dining rooms. In order to save Athens from selfish lawmakers and bad leaders, the women propose a very non-Athenian government and, by doing so, undermine the basis of the conventional Athenian democracy.

The stolen cloaks are part of this proposal because this is the only way the decree can be brought to the Assembly in the first place.<sup>665</sup> The masquerade is thus a tool to carry out the

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<sup>663</sup> For scholarship on what real Greek women sounded like, see, for example, Gilleland 1980, Sommerstein 1995, Dickey 1995, and Dickey 1996. Cf. *Thesm.* 266, where Euripides tells the relative, "but when you talk, be sure your voice sounds feminine, and be convincing!" (ἦν λαλῆς δ', ὅπως τῷ φθέγματι γυναικειῖς εὖ καὶ πιθανῶς).

<sup>664</sup> See, for instance, Saïd 1979, Stone 1981, Foley 1982, Muecke 1982, Taaffe 1993, Zeitlin 1996, Bassi 1998, McClure 1999, Compton-Engle 2003, and Compton-Engle 2005.

<sup>665</sup> In regards to this act of larceny, there is a noteworthy observation. There is a distinct type of offence called *λωποδυσία*, the act of clothes-snatching or slipping into another's clothes. For instance, Euelpides refers to this act in *Birds* 497, Lysias mentions it in *Ag. Theom.* I 10.10, and Aeschines draws on it in *Ag. Tim.* 1.91. (See also Phillips 2013: 337). Harris states that the distinction between a regular thief and a clothes-snatcher (*λωποδύτης*) "is probably between those who take another person's property stealthily and those who seize it openly." More importantly, "to arrest a thief or a clothes-snatcher, one had to catch the thief in highly incriminating circumstances, that is, either in the act or with the stolen object in his possession soon after the crime was committed. The clothes-snatcher presumably had to be seized during the actual assault or just after he took the clothes." Harris 2013: 53-54.

mischievous plan; however, it neither transforms the women into men permanently nor does it provide them with male character traits. (This is, after all, the mistake Dionysus makes in *Frogs* when he falsely believes that he assumes the traits of the person whose costume he is wearing).<sup>666</sup> This is also why the women's performance of their masculinity is flawed: they are insulted when they cannot take their knitting to Assembly (89) and they have difficulties suppressing female oaths (155).<sup>667</sup> In comic fashion, and presumably much to the audience's entertainment, the women struggle to act like men. But at the same time, this comic struggle also underlines the statement made earlier: the women do not wish to run the city as men but as women. As soon as the Assembly passes the decree, the masquerade is discarded and the women go back to their everyday clothing.

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While the women in *Ecclesiazusae* take their husbands' cloaks secretly in order not to jeopardize their undertaking, Praxagora is later called out on it by Blepyrus when he asks her why she took his cloak instead of hers (535-8). However, she is not prosecuted, presumably because it would push the boundaries of the comedy a bit far if she were and because by abolishing legal processes and making everything communal, this particular crime is probably no longer a problem either.

<sup>666</sup> Cf. Saïd 1979: 35 and Taaffe 1991: 107. The mischievous aspects of the masquerade highlight More's disdain for kings and lawyers who adopt an infinite variety of disguises that interfere with the truth. This is why Utopian citizens possess only one persona, which prevents them from engaging in any kind of role-play. Cf. pp. 32-3.

<sup>667</sup> We see a reverse scenario in *Thesmophoriazusae* when the relative first swears by Apollo at 269, and then by Artemis at 517.

According to Willi 2003: 189, this shows that "oaths could be linguistic markers. Apart from obvious slips like mistakes or grammatical gender and wrong forms of address, oaths are the only gender-linguistic feature that is explicitly commented upon." This suggests that oaths in the comedy are an area in which there is a clear linguistic demarcation, which the women have trouble crossing. Cf. Sommerstein 1995: 65-6. See also Oath ID 788 in *The Oath in Archaic and Classical Greece* database, where it says: "The fact that the woman swears by the two goddesses (Demeter and Persephone), although she is pretending to be a man, gives her away as this is a woman's oath...." Cf. Oath ID 713 on *Thesmophoriazusae* 383-384, where Demeter and Persephone are invoked, "this oath by Demeter and Persephone had no special connection with the Thesmophoria but was frequently used by women (and only women) at all times." Cf. Sommerstein 2014: 321.

The fact that the women remain distinctively female in their approach and methods<sup>668</sup> (even when in male disguise) also becomes clear when looking at Praxagora's recitation of her political proposal in the assembly. Even though she does vacillate between male and female rhetoric, similarly to *Lysistrata*, she makes clear that even though she is a woman her rhetorical skills are equal to those of an Athenian man. The passage that especially emphasizes her eloquence, and use of political and philosophical metaphors, is found in lines 169-261 of *Ecclesiazusae*. Comparably with the beginning of *Lysistrata*, the passage begins by underlining Praxagora's concern for both Athens and Greece as a whole as well as the fact that just because she is a woman, does not mean she is not able to voice her opinion on political matters. In lines 174-5 she addresses the assembly and says: ὅσον περ ὑμῖν: ἄχθομαι δὲ καὶ φέρω τὰ τῆς πόλεως ἅπαντα βαρέως πράγματα. "My own stake in this country is equal to your own, and I am annoyed and depressed at all the city's affairs."<sup>669</sup> Not only does this connect to *Lysistrata*'s statement that the future of Greece is in her hands but also to the traditional 'lament and blame' *topoi* used by real Athenian orators who criticise current political affairs. By utilizing this kind of rhetoric, Praxagora not only mocks these real orators but she simultaneously demonstrates her own rhetorical ability.

The 'blame' aspect becomes especially clear in the next lines when Praxagora directly blames the demos for the state of the current affairs; she says that it is their own fault because they always elect bad leaders. She says: ὁρῶ γὰρ αὐτὴν προστάταισι χρωμένην ἀεὶ πονηροῖς. "For I see that she constantly employs scoundrels as her leaders." The reason for this is similar to the one we see in *Birds*, *Knights*, and *Lysistrata*: the demos is easily deceived by

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<sup>668</sup> Pelling 2000: 214.

<sup>669</sup> *Eccl.* 174-5.

both sight and sound, and struggles to recognise the intentions of a speaker. As Praxagora states:<sup>670</sup>

κᾶν τις ἡμέραν μίαν  
χρηστὸς γένηται, δέκα πονηρὸς γίγνεται.  
ἐπέτρεψας ἑτέρῳ: πλείον' ἔτι δράσει κακά;  
χαλεπὸν μὲν οὖν ἄνδρας δυσαρέστους νουθετεῖν,  
οἷ τοὺς φιλεῖν μὲν βουλομένους δεδοίκατε,  
τοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἀντιβολεῖθ' ἐκάστοτε.

Even if one of them turns virtuous for one day, he'll turn out wicked for ten. You look for another one? He'll make even worse trouble. I realize how hard it is to talk sense to men as cantankerous as you, who fear those who want to befriend you and consistently court those who do not.

Once again, Aristophanes is walking a fine line here by implying that the Athenian demos is unreasonable, difficult to talk to, and unable to elect a leader who acts for the good of the *polis*. Not only does this emphasise the points made earlier in regards to *Knights* and *Lysistrata*, and the relevance of the Gorgianic problem of perception, but it also links to a central problem mentioned by Aeschines in *Against Ctesiphon* around five decades later where he talks about the Athenians' inability to figure out the long-term ramifications of decisions made in the assembly.<sup>671</sup>

Aeschines points out that the demos might make a rash decision in the assembly triggered by their emotions, or because they were persuaded by the words of dishonest orators, and that they fail to hear the wisest and most just decrees.<sup>672</sup> “The eventual consequences of a quick decision made under the influence of emotion or evil rhetoric,” Ober writes, “might be disastrous, as was the case with the Sicilian Expedition of 415-13.”<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> *Eccl.* 177-182.

<sup>671</sup> *Against Ctesiphon* 3.3-4. Cf. Thucydides 3.38.4-7, where Cleon scolds the Athenians for allowing themselves to be deceived and for being the victims of new-fangled arguments.

<sup>672</sup> Ober 1989: 301.

<sup>673</sup> Ober 1989: 301.

Similarly to Aeschines, Praxagora asserts that the demos has ceased to listen to good politicians and, like Aeschines, she reminds the audience of a time when this was not the case. In lines 183-5, she says: ἐκκλησίαισιν ἦν ὅτ' οὐκ ἐχρώμεθα οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν: ἀλλὰ τόν γ' Ἀγύρριον πονηρὸν ἠγούμεσθα. “There was a time when we convened no assemblies at all, but at least we knew Agyrrhius for a scoundrel.”<sup>674</sup> This statement, which clearly criticises the current political system in Athens, is the first indication for the proto-communist regime Praxagora is about to establish. More importantly, it relates Praxagora to other Greek orators who insert specific historical examples at the right moment in their speech. As Worthington notes: “Rhetorical allusion to a particular event or period inserted into a speech was calculated

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<sup>674</sup> Cf. Eupolis’ *Cities* fr. 219 (Athenaeus 425b), οὓς δ’ οὐκ ἂν εἴλεσθ’ οὐδ’ ἂν οἰνόπτας πρὸς τοῦ, νυνὶ στρατηγούς <-> . ὦ πόλις, πόλις, ὡς εὐτυχῆς εἶ μᾶλλον ἢ καλῶς φρονεῖς. (“Men whom before now you wouldn’t even have chosen as wine inspectors, now you elect as generals. O my city, my city, you are more lucky than smart”). See also Eupolis fr. 384 (Stobaeus 4.1.9), which, according to Storey, might have been part of *Demes*, *Cities*, or *Maricas*.

καὶ μὴν ἐγὼ πολλῶν παρόντων οὐκ ἔχω τί λέξω.  
οὕτω σφόδρ’ ἀλγῶ τὴν πολιτείαν ὁρῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν.  
ἡμεῖς γὰρ οὐχ οὕτω τέως ὠκοῦμεν οἱ γέροντες,  
ἀλλ’ ἦσαν ἡμῖν τῇ πόλει πρῶτον μὲν οἱ στρατηγοὶ  
ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων οἰκιῶν, πλούτῳ γένει τε πρῶτοι,  
οἷς ὡσπερὶ θεοῖσιν ἠυχόμεσθα· καὶ γὰρ ἦσαν.  
ὥστ’ ἀσφαλῶς ἐπράττομεν· νυνὶ δ’ ὅπη τύχοιμεν,  
στρατευόμεσθ’ αἰρούμενοι καθάρματα στρατηγούς.

Well now, with so many possibilities I don’t know what to say. I am so upset when I look at our [your?] state of government. This is not how we old men used to live. Our city had generals from the greatest families, leaders in wealth and birth, to whom we prayed as if they were gods—and gods they were to us. And so we lived in security. But now we take the field in haphazard fashion, electing as our generals the scum of the earth.

See also *Frogs* 718-37, where the Chorus makes a similar argument about the Athenians choosing bad citizens, and appeals to them to change their ways.

to have the desired effect on the audience and thus lend weight to the overall thrust of the speech.”<sup>675</sup>

Indeed, in Praxagora’s opinion, it was easier to see a speaker’s true intentions when there were no assemblies; this is because assemblies tend to praise the wrong people (e.g. people like Agyrrhius) for the wrong reasons (e.g. financial gain), which becomes clear in the next lines: *νῦν δὲ χρωμένων ὁ μὲν λαβὼν ἀργύριον ὑπερεπήνεσεν...* “Nowadays we do convene them, and the people who draw pay praise him to the skies...”<sup>676</sup>

In a way, Praxagora’s argument makes sense. Generally, assemblies were more or less representative of the Athenian citizen body but, as Ober also points out, “it was impossible that every Assembly could represent a full cross section of the demos.”<sup>677</sup> Therefore, an assembly that leans toward one end of the political spectrum might come to a decision that is not in everyone’s interest. A famous example for this can be found in Thucydides 8.67: in 411, the assembly held outside the city, at Colonus, abolishes democracy and imposes penalties on any Athenian who wishes to propose an alternative decree. Instead, power is given to the Four Hundred, and the Athenian democracy becomes an oligarchy. Granted, this decision was made under the stress and turmoil of the Peloponnesian War but it still brings to mind the places that the popular will can lead the demos, and it is fair to assume that

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<sup>675</sup> Worthington 1994: 109. That being said, Worthington continues, “that the accuracy of the historical information contained in speeches by the Greek orators is open to doubt is no small understatement.”

<sup>676</sup> *Ecccl.* 185. Agyrrhius is credited with introducing the three-obol wage for attending the Assembly. Praxagora seems to believe that people only attend Assembly because they are getting paid and that they do not really care about what is actually being discussed during Assembly. See McClure 1999: 244-5. Also note that Praxagora’s use of ἀργύριον, meaning money or a small coin, could be a pun on the name Agyrrhius, i.e. Ἀγύρριος introduced ἀργύριον to the Assembly.

Cf. Gorgias’ *Helen* 1, ἴση γὰρ ἁμαρτία καὶ ἁμαθία μέμφεσθαι τε τὰ ἐπαινετὰ καὶ ἐπαινεῖν τὰ μωμητά. (‘For it is equal error and mistake to blame the praisable and to praise the blameable’).

<sup>677</sup> Ober 1989: 301.

Praxagora thinks about this when proposing the abolition of assemblies: when there is nothing to overthrow, coups like those in 411 will not happen anymore.<sup>678</sup>

Indeed, it is the popular will, and the fluctuations of it, that seem to be of concern to Praxagora. For in the next few lines she describes the constant fluctuations of the demos' opinions.<sup>679</sup> For instance, the demos wished for the city to be ratified, but when it was ratified, they were unhappy;<sup>680</sup> there are always different political opinions amongst different social groups in the demos (τῷ πένητι μὲν δοκεῖ, τοῖς πλουσίοις δὲ καὶ γεωργοῖς οὐ δοκεῖ);<sup>681</sup> and the relationships with the Corinthians are never stable.<sup>682</sup> (It is ironic that towards the end of the play, a character describes Praxagora's newly established regime in a similar way: he refuses to hand over his possessions to the government because they (and the demos) constantly change their mind anyway. He says: ἐγὼ δα τούτους χειροτονοῦντας μὲν ταχύ, ἅπτ' ἂν δὲ δόξη ταῦτα πάλιν ἀρνούμενους. "I know these people: they're quick to vote on something then they turn around and refuse to abide by whatever it was").<sup>683</sup>

This sentiment is elaborated in lines 205-209 of Praxagora's speech when she compares the demos' always-changing opinion to the tossing of a ship.<sup>684</sup>

ὕμεῖς γάρ ἐστ' ὃ δῆμε τούτων αἴτιοι.  
τὰ δημόσια γὰρ μισθοφοροῦντες χρήματα  
ἰδίᾳ σκοπεῖσθ' ἕκαστος ὃ τι τις κερδανεῖ,  
τὸ δὲ κοινὸν ὥσπερ Αἴσιμος κυλίνδεται.  
ἦν οὖν ἐμοὶ πείθησθε, σωθήσεσθ' ἔτι.

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<sup>678</sup> Likewise, Lysistrata's coup against warfare and military matters would probably not be feasible under Praxagora's regime.

<sup>679</sup> *Eccl.* 193-200.

<sup>680</sup> *Eccl.* 193-4.

<sup>681</sup> *Eccl.* 197-8.

<sup>682</sup> *Eccl.* 199-200.

<sup>683</sup> *Eccl.* 796.

<sup>684</sup> In regards to the example of Aesimus, Sommerstein writes: "The scholia assert that Aesimus was 'lame, disfranchised [or dishonoured] and stupid', apparently taking κυλίνδεται to mean 'reels about like a cripple, drunkard or idiot'; but this sense of the verb is not otherwise attested." Sommerstein 1998: 158.

And you, the sovereign people, are responsible for this mess. For while drawing your civic pay from public funds, each of you angles for a personal profit. Meanwhile the public interest flounders like Aesimus. But listen to my advice and you shall escape from your muddle.

The use of τὸ κοινὸν κυλίνδεται is particularly significant and deserves special attention. Praxagora, like many orators before her, evokes the famous ship of state metaphor and compares the public interests (τὸ κοινὸν) to the effects of the sea (κυλίνδεται). In her opinion, the state tosses to and fro like a ship at sea.<sup>685</sup> The kind of language Praxagora uses here, especially her usage of the word κυλίνδω, might have brought to mind certain passages in Homer to the audience. For instance, in *Il.*11.307, Homer writes τρόφι κῦμα κυλίνδεται when describing the constant rolling onwards of swollen waves; and in *Od.*2.136, he writes τοῖσιν γὰρ μέγα πῆμα κυλίνδεται when referring to the great despair that is rolling onto the suitors. Similarly, in *Frogs* 536, Aristophanes uses μετακυλίνδεν to equate a ship's tossing with Dionysus' changing opinion.

Moreover, τὸ κοινὸν also emphasises sharing. Aristotle's concept of κοινωνία, discussed in the chapter on *Birds*, makes clear that human beings who have a perception of what is good and bad, and just and unjust, are a community that make a household and a city. Praxagora's use of the word here is another indication for the *oikos*-like city she is about to establish. She knows that a family is also a κοινωνία, as they share the goods of the household. By referring to the Athenian demos in the same way, she prepares for the stage to become “an area in comedy in which the distinctive and the peculiar are opened up to be shared by all...”<sup>686</sup> Therefore, by including τὸ κοινὸν κυλίνδεται in her speech, Praxagora highlights an important trademark of the new regime: there will be no more disagreements and wavering opinions amongst the members of the Athenian community, and thus no more

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<sup>685</sup> This recalls the circular movements seen in the *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias*, especially the recurrent moments of foundations and cataclysms in which Athens seems to be trapped.

<sup>686</sup> Saxonhouse 2000: 58.

ring-like compositions and circular movements. Instead, there will be pre-established opinions that are suitable for all and that will allow for a progressive government.<sup>687</sup>

The idea that the gynaeocracy will be more progressive than the previous regime is also hinted at in a claim made earlier in the play. In line 109, Praxagora remarks: νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὔτε θέομεν οὔτ' ἐλαύνομεν. "As it is, our city is oarless and becalmed." Praxagora asserts that, as things are the moment, the Athenians neither sail nor row; they are motionless and not getting anywhere. She uses this nautical vocabulary to describe the current situation in Athens and to appeal to the assembly that they have to do better than this if they want to move forward and escape the realm of waves and circles. Like any good orator, she also tells them how they can do better: ἦν οὖν ἐμοὶ πείθησθε, σωθήσεσθ' ἔτι. "But listen to my advice and you shall escape from your muddle."<sup>688</sup> Of course, her advice is to hand over the rule to the women, for only then will Athens have a progressive government: ταῖς γὰρ γυναιξὶ φημὶ χρῆναι τὴν πόλιν ἡμᾶς παραδοῦναι.<sup>689</sup>

It is worth noting here that the meaning of Praxagora's ship of state metaphor is different from Lysistrata's. For in *Lysistrata*, the ship of state metaphor is used primarily to underscore a problem that appears frequently in the scene with the Proboulos: the Proboulos struggles to understand Lysistrata because of the abstract nature of her arguments (and because she is from a different faction) and is reluctant to offer her the opportunity to show her skills. In *Ecclesiazusae*, on the other hand, the metaphor is used to emphasise both the concept of unity and the removal of democratic politics. Additionally, it is used in opposite ways in the plays. In *Lysistrata*, it points at the importance of democratic decision-making that involves everyone and not just a select, potentially incompetent, few; and in

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<sup>687</sup> This is in line with More's rationale for Utopia, if there is no room for private political debate and factions, no alternative proposals against the established regime can be made.

<sup>688</sup> *Eccl.* 209.

<sup>689</sup> *Eccl.* 210-11.

*Ecclesiazusae*, it is used to underline tyrannical decision-making that does not involve everyone. In this manner, Praxagora's speech, while similar in style to Lysistrata's, is ultimately also less comforting. This is because it is much more reassuring to listen to someone who offers democracy and metaphorical warm cloaks as a solution than to someone who advocates violence and the abolition of democracy.

However, while Praxagora uses the ship of state metaphor in a different way from Lysistrata, like Lysistrata, she soon launches into an argument that shows why the women are better suited to run Athens than the men. She begins by asserting that women are simply superior to men: ὡς δ' εἰσὶν ἡμῶν τοὺς τρόπους βελτίονες ἐγὼ διδάξω.<sup>690</sup> This claim of superiority is doubtless provocative (and presumably ridiculous) to the audience but it does have parallels with other texts. For instance, in Euripides' *Melanippe Captive*, the speaker scolds men for denouncing women, for they are so much better suited at running things than men are. μάτην ἄρ' ἐς γυναῖκας ἐξ ἀνδρῶν ψόγος ψάλλει κενὸν τόξευμα καὶ λέγει κακῶς· αἱ δ' εἰς' ἀμείνους ἀρσένων, δείξω δ' ἐγώ. "Vainly does censure from men twang an idle bowshot at women and denounce them. In fact, they are better than men, as I shall demonstrate..."<sup>691</sup> In this account, the claim of superiority mainly derives from the women's roles in the household: νέμουσι δ' οἶκους καὶ τὰ ναστολούμενα ἔ[σω] δόμων σώζουσιν, οὐδ' ἐρημία γυναικὸς οἶκος εὐπινῆς οὐδ' ὄλβιος. "They manage households, and save what is brought by sea within the home, and no house deprived of a woman can be tidy and prosperous."

In *Thesmophoriazusae*, on the other hand, the female characters prove themselves superior through the etymologies of their names. The Chorus Leader examines whether men

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<sup>690</sup> *Eccl.* 214-5.

<sup>691</sup> *Melanippe Captive* 494.

or women are the worse (χείρους) group by contrasting them and placing the name of a woman and a man side by side.<sup>692</sup>

Ναυσιμάχης μὲν γ' ἥττων ἐστὶν Χαρμῖνος· δῆλα δὲ τάργα.  
καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ Κλεοφῶν χείρων πάντως δήπου Ξαλαβακχοῦς.  
πρὸς Ἀριστομάχην δὲ χρόνου πολλοῦ, πρὸς ἐκείνην τὴν Μαραθῶνι,  
καὶ Ξτρατονίκην ὑμῶν οὐδεὶς οὐδ' ἐγχειρεῖ πολεμίζειν.  
ἀλλ' Εὐβούλης τῶν πέρυσιν τις βουλευτὴς ἐστὶν ἀμείνων  
παραδοὺς ἐτέρῳ τὴν βουλείαν; οὐδ' αὐτὸς τοῦτό γε φήσεις.  
οὕτως ἡμεῖς πολὺ βελτίους τῶν ἀνδρῶν εὐχόμεθ' εἶναι.

Take Nausimache and Charminos: he's inferior—what could be clearer?

Here's a further example: take Kleophon—far worse than the tart Salabaccho!

No man even tries to compete with Aristomache, Marathonian woman.

And the same is true where Stratonike's military might is concerned.

But as for last year's Councillors, not one could match Euboule. They abandoned office to somebody else: they couldn't deny it themselves.

So that's why we boast that women are better, much better, than all you men.

Praxagora's statement is equally bold, and by providing this link to similar proclamations made in other dramatic texts, she not only offers a comic reversal of the traditional Athenian hierarchy but she also paves the way for the next lines where she explains how exactly the women are superior to the men. At first, she emphasises the old-fashioned

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<sup>692</sup> *Thesm.* 801-10. See also Kanavou 2011: 151-2, who writes, “Ναυσιμάχη ‘fighting at sea’, is appropriately superior to Charminos, the Athenian general defeated by Sparta at a naval battle earlier that year (Th. 8.41.3 – 43.1).” “The meanings of Ἀριστομάχη (‘best fighter’) and Ξτρατονίκη (‘victory for the army’) are related and imply female success in the battle field, where men have appeared (in the context of current war) to be highly inadequate.” “Εὐβούλη, ‘of right judgment’, alludes to the ability of good thinking, also a traditionally male characteristic.” Ξαλαβακχώ, meanwhile, “is used for a different sort of joke. It belonged to a well-known *hetaera*...and it is clearly not chosen for a positive etymological meaning, but for the allusion to the courtesan and for its position at the end of the line: while the other women's names...introduce statements about female superiority to men, in the case of Salabakho's name the joke is that the demagogue Kleophon...is worse than her, a prostitute...”

nature of the women and their respect for ancient customs (κοῦχί μεταπειρωμένας ἴδοις ἂν αὐτάς).<sup>693</sup> She scolds the Athenian men for messing around with innovations that are not necessary while the women attend to traditional things as they have always done (ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ): they celebrate the Thesmophoria, enjoy cooking, baking, drinking, and sex.<sup>694</sup> Somewhat paradoxically then, “the radically new order is underpinned by the claim that its beneficiaries represent the Athenian reservoir of old-fashioned virtues.”<sup>695</sup>

This speech about the good old days not only links to the theme of ‘return to the origins,’ already seen in the previous chapters, but it also feeds into Praxagora’s earlier criticism of the demos: back in the day, people did not take money to attend assembly; instead they took their civic duty seriously and acted for the good of the polis.<sup>696</sup> Moreover, it links to the older characters in the play that represent the wisdom of the older generation in Athens (see, for instance, 895-6). At the same time, we see how this criticism and knowledge of ancestral customs gives way to the women’s *coup d’état*. Generally speaking, Praxagora is a lot more innovative than some of the other characters in Aristophanic comedy, and she is certainly more ground-breaking than Lysistrata. For Lysistrata, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter (cf. p. 213), is meant to symbolise the oldest and best Athenian virtues, which are supposed to reject warfare as the irrational thing that it is. Praxagora, on the other hand, is meant to represent a new order. She may emphasise the women’s knowledge of ancient customs in order to underline her argument, and her regime may be modelled after the

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<sup>693</sup> *Eccl.* 217-8. A related statement about the old-fashioned nature of women also appears in *Cratylus* 418c, when Socrates says to Hermogenes that women ‘are most addicted to preserving old forms of speech.’ (μάλιστα τὴν ἀρχαίαν φωνὴν σφύζουσι).

<sup>694</sup> *Eccl.* 221-8.

<sup>695</sup> Ober 1998: 146.

<sup>696</sup> Reckford 1987: 345. See also *Eccl.* 302a-310c.

traditional values of the *oikos*, but at the end of the day, the government she establishes has little to do with the Athenian status quo that Lysistrata seeks to restore.<sup>697</sup>

The fact that the new government will be radically different from the democratic Athens is also implied in the subsequent lines of Praxagora's speech. She does not want to say what exactly the new regime will entail, which is undoubtedly rather suspicious. Instead, she says: παραδόντες τὴν πόλιν μὴ περιλαλῶμεν, μηδὲ πυνθανώμεθα τί ποτ' ἄρα δρᾶν μέλλουσιν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶ τρόπῳ ἐῶμεν ἄρχειν. "Let us hand over governance of the city to the women, and let's not beat around the bush or ask what they plan to accomplish. Let's simply let them govern."<sup>698</sup> This statement is far from being a trustworthy one, and it certainly suggests that the new government may not be the most transparent one the Athenians have ever seen.

The suspiciousness of these lines is also highlighted by Praxagora's use of the word ἀπλῶ. Ἀπλῶ means 'single, simple and plain,' and initially it seems that Praxagora uses the word in order to underscore her good intentions for the new government. This positive connotation of ἀπλῶ recalls section 8.36 in Pindar's *Nemean*, where he appeals to Zeus to help him stay away from hateful allurements (ἐχθρὰ πάρφασις) and flattering tales (αἰμύλων μύθων), and instead help him stay on a straightforward path in life (κελεύθοις ἀπλόαις ζωᾶς). Praxagora does something similar when she promises to lead her regime on a straight path that does not include ambiguities, hatred, and deceitful speech. It also brings to mind a passage from Polybius' *Histories* when he uses ἀπλῶ in the superlative in order to refer to the simplest of lives (ἀπλουστάτοις βίοις) that is removed from extravagance and excess (τῆς ἐν

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<sup>697</sup> Cf. Saxonhouse 1992: 8. The fact that Praxagora appropriates male speech here in order to undermine the Athenian status quo can be compared with the role of Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia*, where "she uses her ability to mimic and appropriate masculine and public language to serve what from the choral perspective would be a regime that entirely undercuts the cultural status quo." See Foley 2001: 204.

<sup>698</sup> *Eccl.* 229-232.

τούτοις περιττότητος καὶ πολυτελείας ἀφεστῶτες).<sup>699</sup> Again, this underlines Praxagora's goal to rule her government in a simple manner and to stay away from unnecessary superfluity.

However, it is also clear that when Praxagora asserts that the demos should simply let the women govern (ἀπλῶ τρόπῳ ἐῶμεν ἄρχειν) she does not merely mean that they should *just* let them govern and have faith in them, but also that they should let them govern with a *simple* narrative that does not include a proper discussion about the type of government they are about to establish. The idea that ἀπλῶ does not only have positive connotations becomes also clear when looking at other Greek texts. For example, in Isocrates' *To Nicocles*, Isocrates laments that people often fail to take pleasure in the things that are the most honourable, useful, and noblest to them. Instead, they pursue things, which are contrary to their best interest.<sup>700</sup> By doing so, "they shun the verities of life" (τὰς ἀληθείας τῶν πραγμάτων φεύγουσιν), as they do not even know their own interests (ὥστ' οὐδὲ τὰ σφέτερ' αὐτῶν ἴσασιν).<sup>701</sup> The reason for this is, Isocrates asserts, that people "look upon men of wisdom with suspicion, while they regard men of no understanding as open and sincere" (φθονοῦσι μὲν τοῖς εἴ φρονοῦσιν, ἀπλοῦς δ' ἠγοῦνται τοὺς νοῦν οὐκ ἔχοντας).<sup>702</sup>

Here, ἀπλοῦς is used to describe simple-minded people ('men of no understanding') who are looked up to by others. This links to the abovementioned passage in *Ecclesiastusae*, for Praxagora is also praised by people who are unable to see the truth, and who regard her as open and sincere despite the fact that she is ἀπλῆ, i.e. too unqualified and simple-minded in order to run a government that is fair to all. Indeed, her view of the matter is too simple, and

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<sup>699</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 9.10.5.

<sup>700</sup> *To Nic.* 2.45. This recalls the failed measurements discussed in the *Protagoras*: people struggle to measure happiness and unhappiness accurately, and thus often choose the wrong side of the scale. Cf. pp. 108-9.

<sup>701</sup> *To Nic.* 2.46.

<sup>702</sup> *To Nic.* 2.46. This in turn brings to mind one of the rationales for Praxagora's government: the Athenians do not know how to distinguish a wise leader from a scoundrel.

here ἀπλῶ also brings to mind a section in Plato's *Protagoras* where Protagoras tells Socrates that his view of the parallels between justice and holiness is not as simple as his is. He says: "I do not take quite so simple a view of it, Socrates..." οὐ πάνυ μοι δοκεῖ, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, οὕτως ἀπλοῦν.<sup>703</sup> Again, ἀπλοῦν is used to describe a simple mind-set that fails to look at the matter at hand from different angles; this highlights the negative connotations of Praxagora's speech further: she may say that the issue at hand is a simple matter for which no thorough discussion is necessary, but linking her use of ἀπλῶ to that of others shows us that what is about to happen is much larger than she says it is.

Returning to her speech, even though she does give a few examples in the next lines, which highlight the resemblance between a city and a family (discussed earlier), she does not actually tell the audience how she and the other women intend to save Athens. She merely points out the women's maternal instinct and the fact that they are skilled in household management. She then stops there and makes another vague claim: τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἐάσω: ταῦτ' ἐὰν πείθησθέ μοι, εὐδαιμονοῦντες τὸν βίον διάξετε. "I'll pass over my other points. Adopt my resolution and you'll lead happy lives."<sup>704</sup> While Praxagora is in good company here with other politicians who make ambiguous statements in the assembly, the sheer elusiveness of her government does not bode well for the Athenians. On the contrary, it is yet another sign that the audience is witnessing the descent of a democracy into a tyranny.<sup>705</sup>

Unsurprisingly, and in true Aristophanic fashion, the characters of the play are elated at the prospect of the government Praxagora proposes. Like the Athenian demos, scolded earlier by Praxagora for not paying proper attention to an orator's rhetoric, and like the gullible birds in *Birds*, Praxagora's audience is swayed by her eloquence. As the Second

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<sup>703</sup> *Prot.* 331b.

<sup>704</sup> *Eccl.* 239-240.

<sup>705</sup> Cf. *Rep.* 547b-562b.

Woman remarks: εὖ γ' ὦ γλυκυτάτη Πραξαγόρα καὶ δεξιῶς. πόθεν ὦ τάλαινα ταῦτ' ἔμαθες οὕτω καλῶς; “Well said, Praxagora my sweet! What skill! Where did you learn such fine talk, my dear?”<sup>706</sup> The woman fails to realise that the part of Praxagora’s speech she is referring to is neither fine nor skilled; it may be well-spoken but, as mentioned earlier, it is nothing but empty rhetoric at the end of the day. Like the Athenian men, whom she and the other women reprimand, she does not see that Praxagora’s proposed regime may not be as great as she thinks it will be.<sup>707</sup>

The deception of Praxagora’s speech is also implied in the next few lines when she responds to the Second Woman’s question quoted above, saying: ἐν ταῖς φυγαῖς μετὰ τὰνδρὸς ὄκησ' ἐν πυκνί. ἔπειτ' ἀκούουσ' ἐξέμαθον τῶν ῥητόρων. “During the displacements I lived with my husband on the Pnyx, and learned by listening to the orators.”<sup>708</sup> As mentioned earlier (cf. p. 240), this stresses the idea that Praxagora, like Lysistrata, vacillates between the two realms of male and female speech, as she offers an example of the actor who successfully appropriates the speech of the opposite gender. Indeed, as McClure asserts, Praxagora appears “as an accomplished public speaker in the Assembly who seduces ‘his’ audience with ‘his’ deceptive speech.”<sup>709</sup> Rothwell states similarly: “Far from giving herself away as a woman

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<sup>706</sup> *Eccl.* 241-2.

<sup>707</sup> Cf. Gagarin 1994: 47, who writes: “Aristophanes’ comic caricature of rhetoric as a vehicle for persuasive falsehood that will sway a largely ignorant audience is the product of a fundamentally conservative critical position. The same basic attitude underlies the sustained philosophical attack on rhetoric in the *Gorgias*.” Comparable depictions of rhetoric can be found in *Clouds* when Strepsiades only wants to learn sophistic rhetoric, so he can escape from his debt-collectors, and in *Wasps* when Aristophanes paints “a picture of the typical Athenian juror as blinded by the prejudice and utterly unconcerned with the truth of a litigant’s case. This ignorant juror is the perfect foil for the sophists’ tricks of persuasion.”

<sup>708</sup> *Eccl.* 243-4.

<sup>709</sup> McClure 1999: 239. In this vein, both Lysistrata and Praxagora might be seen as examples of characters who blur the distinction between categories that are otherwise assumed to be opposite to another. (As is, for instance, the case in the Pythagorean table of opposites where ‘male’ and ‘female’ are on opposite sides). This also recalls Lysistrata’s use of the weaving-metaphor, which she employs in order to combine (and indeed, weave together) different

who is unfamiliar with oratory, she positively shines...‘a fine exercise in rhetoric,’ ‘so accurate is the parody that the speech would do credit to an actual speaker in the assembly.’”<sup>710</sup> This is also why the First Woman makes this remark in response to Praxagora’s statement that she learned to speak from her husband and other orators: οὐκ ἐπὶ ἄρ’ ὃ μέλ’ ἦσθα δεινὴ καὶ σοφὴ. “Then it’s no wonder, madam, that you were so impressive and sage.”<sup>711</sup>

That being said, despite their similarities, Praxagora and Lysistrata employ different styles of appropriation. When Praxagora tells her audience how she learned the male language, she uses the verb ἐκμανθάνω. This suggests that she examined the language of the orators she mentions very closely and learned it by heart (cf. *Laws* 811a), which in turn indicates that she knows the relevant vocabulary through and through. Lysistrata, on the other hand, when she describes her appropriation of the male language, uses the verb μουσόομαι (1127), which, while similar in meaning, has different connotations to ἐκμανθάνω. Particularly, it is passive, meaning ‘to be educated’ or ‘to be trained in the ways of the Muses’ rather than active as is the case of ἐκμανθάνω. This implies that Lysistrata did not study the male language as actively as Praxagora did (who, by using an active form, stays literally true to the etymology of her name). This is underlined further by Aelian’s use of the word at *NA* 16.3, where he talks about an Indian bird that, if taught to utter human speech (μουσῳθεὶς φωνήν) is more talkative than the parrot. The passive form, and its employment to describe

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factions. Like the Pythagorean table, and the female-male rhetoric, the metaphor draws attention to the combination of opposites, which in turn underlines Lysistrata’s political potential because, like the true statesman in Plato’s *Statesman*, she is a “political weaver [who is] concerned with intertwining two opposite groups of citizens.” Lane 1998: 177.

<sup>710</sup> Rothwell 1990: 84.

<sup>711</sup> *Eccl.* 245. The chorus in *Thesmophoriazusae* uses the same word (δεινός) to describe the first woman’s speech, οὐπω ταύτης ἤκουσα πολυπλοκοτέρας γυναικὸς οὐδὲ δεινότερον λεγούσης. (“I’ve never heard a woman more intricate of mind or more impressive as a speaker”).

something similar (namely, an adaptation of a kind of human speech), suggests further that Lysistrata's appropriation of the masculine language is not as active as that of Praxagora.<sup>712</sup>

Therefore, while both characters are undeniably very clever, ultimately Praxagora's rhetorical skills are superior. Indeed, they are so 'impressive and sage' that she emerges, anachronistically, as a prime example of Aristotle's means of persuasion. Specifically, at *Rhetoric* 1377b, Aristotle stresses the importance of *pathos*, which is used in order to create a certain mood in the audience; and it is clear that Praxagora employs that method when utilizing the 'lament and blame' rhetoric at the beginning of her speech. It is also clear that she employs the concept of *eunoia* equally well in order to establish a bond between her and the audience in order to ensure that the rest of her speech will do its work.<sup>713</sup> By sharing a language with the group she addresses, she constructs a narrative of belonging (as Tereus and Peisetaerus have done before her), which in turn generates a feeling of trust in the audience. Furthermore, she makes use of a strategy mentioned at 1377b, namely *ethos*, in order to induce the degree of trust further and "to produce a feeling of goodwill in the audience towards the speaker" so she can reach the effect sought by her.<sup>714</sup> She does this, for example, when she tells the other women that she learned political rhetoric by listening to other men. Like Nestor's appeal to his age and experience at *Il.* 1.260, which is supposed to underline his

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<sup>712</sup> This also means that Praxagora, "like many other Aristophanic main heroes' names, has the sound of an 'earned' name." Kanavou 2011: 172.

The idea that it is worth exploring the different styles of appropriation was given to me by Catherine Conybeare and Brett Rogers during the Q&A of my paper ("The Athenian female ideal and its opposite: female rhetors in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*"), given at the 'Prometheus, Pandora, Adam and Eve: Archetypes of the Masculine and Feminine and their Reception throughout the Ages' conference at Bar-Ilan University on 20 March 2017.

<sup>713</sup> See Carey 1994: 29. Lysistrata does something similar when she gathers the women at the beginning of the play, but I would say that ultimately Praxagora is more successful because, unlike Lysistrata, she manages to convince both sexes.

<sup>714</sup> Carey 1994: 35. See also Russell 1990: 198. Cf. Mossman 1995: 98-99 to see how this description relates to Greek tragedy, (rather than comedy, as is the case here).

expertise in military matters, so Praxagoras's reference is intended to constitute a claim to her authority in political affairs.

Finally, Praxagora also knows how to appropriate style suitably when she addresses the women, which brings to mind section 1408a of the *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle talks about the importance of the 'propriety of style' and the combination of language with external characteristics (such as sex and age). He says:

πιθανοῖ δὲ τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ ἡ οἰκεία λέξις: παραλογίζεται τε γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς λέγοντος, ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις οὕτως ἔχουσιν, ὥστ' οἴονται, εἰ καὶ μὴ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς λέγει ὁ λέγων, τὰ πράγματα οὕτως ἔχειν, καὶ συνομοπαθεῖ ὁ ἀκούων ἀεὶ τῷ παθητικῶς λέγοντι, κἂν μὴθὲν λέγῃ. διὸ πολλοὶ καταπλήττουσι τοὺς ἀκροατὰς θορυβοῦντες.

Appropriate style also makes the fact appear credible; for the mind of the hearer is imposed upon under the impression that the speaker is speaking the truth, because, in such circumstances, his feelings are the same, so that he thinks (even if it is not the case as the speaker puts it) that things are as he represents them; and the hearer always sympathizes with one who speaks emotionally, even though he really says nothing. This is why speakers often confound their hearers by mere noise.

Especially 'καὶ συνομοπαθεῖ ὁ ἀκούων ἀεὶ τῷ παθητικῶς λέγοντι, κἂν μὴθὲν λέγῃ' echoes both the women's positive reaction to Praxagora's proposal as well as the (negative) male elements of her style of delivery, which are more about making noise and provoking uproar than anything else.<sup>715</sup> Again, this shows how well Praxagora appropriates masculine speech and how closely she must have paid attention when she observed men doing politics.

Ultimately, it is because of this astute observation and arguable brilliance that the women decide to elect Praxagora as general (στρατηγός).<sup>716</sup> If it has not been clear before, it

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<sup>715</sup> There is another modern parallel which emphasises this point further. Earlier this year, the New York Times advertised their subscription services, and posted: 'Subscribe to nuances, not noise.' This highlights not only the connection between antiquity and modernity pointed out in the introduction, but also the dangers of Praxagora's words.

<sup>716</sup> *Ecccl.* 246. It appears that Praxagora is effectively στρατηγός αὐτοκράτωρ, who enjoys extraordinary powers and authority. See Hamel 1998, esp. pp. 9, 50 and 201-3. This does not necessarily mean that she is 'absolute in powers or exempt from accountability,' (Hammond

should now be obvious to anyone that ‘Gynaikopolis,’ as Sommerstein calls it, “is no more ruled by the women than Cloudcuckoo-ville is ruled by the birds.”<sup>717</sup> The idea that Praxagora is in sole charge of Athens is later confirmed by Blepyrus when he says: φέρε νῦν ἐγὼ σοὶ παρακολουθῶ πλησίον, ἵν’ ἀποβλέπωμαι καὶ λέγωσιν ἐμὲ ταδί, “τὸν τῆς στρατηγοῦ τοῦτον οὐ θαυμάζετε;” “Say, I’d like to tag along at your side, and share the spotlight, with people saying, “Look, that’s none other than the Lady Commander’s husband!”<sup>718</sup> This sentiment is reiterated at lines 834-837 when the Herald proclaims:

ὦ πάντες ἀστοί, νῦν γὰρ οὕτω ταῦτ’ ἔχει,  
 χωρεῖτ’ ἐπείγεσθ’ εὐθὺ τῆς στρατηγίδος,  
 ὅπως ἂν ὑμῖν ἡ τύχη κληρουμένοις  
 φράση καθ’ ἕκαστον ἄνδρ’ ὅποι δειπνήσετε

Now here this, all you citizens—yes, all are included now:  
 get a move on and go straight to the Lady Commander’s  
 place, so that the luck of the draw can determine where  
 each man among you will dine.

It is clear that Praxagora is the στρατηγός and that the Athenian citizens are no more equal to her than the birds are to Peisetaerus in *Birds*. It is also clear that Praxagora’s regime, similarly to the one in *Birds*, is shaped by a deceptive political discourse that is full of jargon and that fails to address the truly important things. Once again, the women epitomise Aeschines’ concern mentioned earlier and show that the demos has ceased to listen to the wisest and most just decrees to which Athens was once accustomed. The suggestion that Praxagora may not propose the wisest and most just decree also becomes evident when looking at the last few lines of the passage analysed here. When asked how she intends to handle potential

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1969: 127), however, considering Praxagora overturns the traditional Athenian constitution, it is unlikely that she is accountable to any of the checks that may have been imposed by it.

<sup>717</sup> Sommerstein 2009: 216.

<sup>718</sup> *Eccl.* 725-7.

confrontations in the assembly and the city-guards (οἱ τοξόται), she says that she will slander their names and nudge them with her elbow (ἐξᾶγκωνιῶ).<sup>719</sup>

On the one hand, this violence is a comic feature that belongs to this fictional world that Aristophanes presents on the stage of the Greek theatre; it is a world in which (comic) violence rather than the rule of law prevails. On the other hand, it refers back to the dubious proclamation made earlier, namely that the demos should just let the women govern without asking too many questions (ἀπλῶ τρόπῳ ἐῶμεν ἄρχειν). If questions should be asked regardless, they may be shut down with violence and slander. In addition to the rest of Praxagora's speech, this is yet another indication that the decree of the women will not necessarily bode well for the Athenians.

The selected passage above then portrays Praxagora's political and legal rhetoric in a way that foreshadows the ambiguous government that is about to be established. The results of her speech are a prime example for where misleading advice, persuasively given, can lead people who are easily swayed by political jargon and who fail to measure the words that are given to them. Certainly, comparably with *Birds* and *Protagoras*, this passage places as much emphasis on poor advice as on poor judgment. However, while the birds may be excused because they are 'bird-brained,' in this case, at least part of the responsibility lies with the Athenians, for their judgment is so poor that Praxagora persuades them without any real difficulty.<sup>720</sup> This brings to mind a section in Pindar's *Nemean* 7.33-4, where he writes:

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<sup>719</sup> *Eccl.* 249-60.

<sup>720</sup> See Carter 2013: 55, who refers to this lack of judgment as "an account that is firmly *critical* of democracy, either the people are too dimwitted to recognize good advice when it is presented to them (the view the messenger in Euripides' *Orestes* takes of some of his fellow citizens), or their judgment is so poor that they are routinely manipulated by unscrupulous politicians. In this last category we find most of Aristophanes' *Knights*." This brings to mind Brennan's argument (cf. p. 103 n. 284), when he argues for less, rather than more, political participation because, in his opinion, not everyone is able to participate in a way that is actually beneficial.

τυφλὸν δ' ἔχει ἤτορ ὄμιλος ἀνδρῶν ὁ πλεῖστος. “The heart of the mass is blind.”<sup>721</sup> It also recalls a passage in Euripides’ *Orestes* when Orestes says to Pylades: δεινὸν οἱ πολλοί, κακούργους ὅταν ἔχωσι προστάτας. “The masses are a dreadful thing when they have wicked leaders.”<sup>722</sup> In the case of *Ecclesiazusae*, the questionable legality of the decree only reinforces this poor judgment and it is now time that we turn to this question of legality and look at it in some more detail.

## VI. The Legality of the Women’s Decree

### VI.a. The Procedure

As mentioned on p. 238, rather than putting the decree in front of a comic assembly of women, as is the case in *Thesmophoriazusae*, Praxagora submits it to the Athenian assembly when the prytaneis call for a debate about the salvation of the polis (τί δ’ ἄλλο γ’ ἢ ἔδοξε τοῖς πρυτάνεσι περὶ σωτηρίας γνώμας καθεῖναι τῆς πόλεως;).<sup>723</sup> The fact that the decree is submitted to the real assembly in the play is important, for it enhances the joke by making it more tangible. The rules of the assembly in *Ecclesiazusae* are those of the real assembly in

<sup>721</sup> The persuasion of the masses also brings to mind Herodotus 5.97, where Aristagoras is able to deceive 30,000 Athenians but fails to fool one single Spartan.

<sup>722</sup> *Orestes* 772. See also Carter 2013: 52, who uses this passage in order to point out that the “assembly scene [in *Orestes*] is narrated in such a way as to keep the people insulated from blame, to an extent. The audience of this play has been primed to accept the view that it will be the politicians’ fault if the people do not decide in favor of Orestes.”

On a related note, see also *Phaedrus* 259-6a, where Phaedrus asks Socrates: οὕτωςι περὶ τούτου ἀκήκοα, ὃ φίλε Σώκρατες, οὐκ εἶναι ἀνάγκην τῷ μέλλοντι ῥήτορι ἔσεσθαι τὰ τῷ ὄντι δίκαια μανθάνειν ἀλλὰ τὰ δόξαντ’ ἂν πλήθει οἵπερ δικάσουσιν, οὐδὲ τὰ ὄντως ἀγαθὰ ἢ καλὰ ἀλλ’ ὅσα δόξει: ἐκ γὰρ τούτων εἶναι τὸ πείθειν ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας. “On that point, Socrates, I have heard that one who is to be an orator does not need to know what is really just, but what would seem just to the multitude who are to pass judgment, and not what is really good or noble, but what will seem to be so; for they say that persuasion comes from what seems to be true, not from the truth.”

<sup>723</sup> *Eccl.* 395-7. Cf. *Thesm.* 943-4, which suggests that the prytaneis are able to schedule an emergency meeting of the council when necessary.

early fourth-century Athens, and while the outcome of the women’s decree is undoubtedly radical, it is not necessarily absurd.<sup>724</sup> On the contrary, as I will demonstrate in this section, the mechanics of getting the decree passed by the assembly are not just based on deception but also on real legal practices of early fourth-century Athens.

It is, I think, a profitable undertaking to read the play’s legal fiction against what we know of contemporary legal reforms and practices, because it opens up several intriguing possibilities for how Aristophanes’ audience might have reacted to the political fantasy presented in *Ecclesiazusae*. It also makes the joke all the more telling, because the comedy envisions a world that is engendered by real Athenian legal and political practices, and thus might just work in theory. In the passages below, I adduce the legal background to the play and offer a subtle unravelling of its interpretative ambiguities in order to lend nuances to our interpretation of the play and to provide an analysis of what it can tell us about the legal practices in Aristophanes’ time.

Let us begin with the call for a debate about the salvation of the polis. Rhodes asserts that this kind of debate “appears to have been an open category, like the Romans’ *de re publica*, an invitation in desperate circumstances to make any proposal for the city’s benefit; we see an example of it in the procedure by which the Four Hundred came to power in 411.”<sup>725</sup> Evidence for this can be found in the resolution of Pythodorus as mentioned in Aristotle’s *Const. Ath.* 29.2-3, where he writes:<sup>726</sup>

τὸν δῆμον ἐλέσθαι μετὰ τῶν προὔπαρχόντων δέκα προβούλων ἄλλους εἴκοσι ἐκ τῶν ὑπὲρ τετταράκοντα ἔτη γεγονότων, οἵτινες ὁμόσαντες ἢ μὴν συγγράψειν ἃ ἂν ἡγῶνται

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<sup>724</sup> Ober 1998: 130.

<sup>725</sup> Rhodes 2004: 225.

<sup>726</sup> Thucydides 8.1 and 8.67 tells us that these ten people were appointed in Athens after the Sicilian disaster to deal with the problem and to reform Cleisthenes’ constitution, which, according to Cleitophon in *Const. Ath.* 29.3, was not democratic but similar to that of Solon. For an account of the problems of the *πάτριος πολιτεία*, see Ostwald 1986: 337-411.

βέλπιστα εἶναι τῇ πόλει, συγγράψουσι περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας· ἐξεῖναι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῷ βουλομένῳ γράφειν, ἵν' ἐξ ἁπάντων αἰρῶνται τὸ ἄριστον.

That in addition to the ten Preliminary Councillors already existing the people choose twenty others from those over forty years of age, and that these, after taking a solemn oath to draft whatever measures they think best for the state, shall draft measures for the public safety; and that it be open to any other person also that wishes, to frame proposals, in order that they may choose the one that is best out of them all.

But in the case of *Ecclesiazusae*, this is complicated. While the statement above does suggest that anyone could offer a *probouleuma* before the assembly, in the comedy the *probouleuma* can be seen as specious—“specious because it has not come from a regular *boule*, but from a rogue group that does not normally vote.”<sup>727</sup> However, while the women’s *probouleuma* comes from a group of people that is usually unable to vote, there is an argument to be made that it is procedurally correct nonetheless – or would be if the women were citizen men.

According to Aristotle, the assembly cannot discuss or vote on anything that the prytaneis do not put on the agenda; and the prytaneis in turn, cannot put anything on the agenda unless the councillors mentioned by Aristotle discuss it first.<sup>728</sup> The fact that the prytaneis call for a debate in *Ecclesiazusae* 395-7 suggests that a) the *probouleuma* of the women is on the agenda, and b) that the council had considered it prior to the meeting.<sup>729</sup> The same is arguably true for the other *probouleumata* that are heard that day. When Chremes recounts the assembly meeting to Blepyrus, he says that there were two other resolutions in addition to that of the women. The first one was made by Neocleides, however it is implied that the audience did not give him a chance to finish his speech (399-405), so we do not know

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<sup>727</sup> Fletcher 2012: 130.

<sup>728</sup> Aristotle, *Const. Ath.* 45.4.

<sup>729</sup> Cf. Rhodes 2004: 225, who writes: “The prytaneis, who until the early fourth century presided at meetings, had special benches at the front, facing the other citizens: the fact that *Ecclesiazusae* mentions the prytaneis’ benches at the front, and does not mention the πρόεδροι, who took over the presidency, inclines me to the view that at the time of *Ecclesiazusae*, in the late 390s, the prytaneis were still presiding.”

what it is that he was going to propose; the second one was made by Euaeon who asked the rich to donate cloaks to the poor and to provide shelter to them in the winter (415-421); and the third was the one made by Praxagora (427-430).

This implies that while the women may infiltrate the assembly by purloining their husbands' cloaks in order to gain entry, they generally seem to follow protocol and do what others do if they wish to propose a resolution to the assembly. This is further supported by the fact that they are not prosecuted for illegal procedure in the play. According to Aristotle, anyone who attempts to introduce a decree to the assembly that has not been approved by the council is subject to prosecution. As he states: κατ' αὐτὰ γὰρ ταῦτα ἔνοχός ἐστιν ὁ νικήσας γραφῆ παρανόμων. "for the proposer who carries such a measure is ipso facto liable to penalty by indictment for illegal procedure."<sup>730</sup> However, there is no mentioning of this in the comedy, which suggests that the women's decree is procedurally correct.<sup>731</sup> In fact, they even seem to introduce their decree to the assembly better than others, for the assembly interrupts Neocleides and does not seem to vote in favour of Euaeon either. This is significant on many levels. For not only does this comically underline Praxagora's argument that women are better

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<sup>730</sup> Aristotle, *Const. Ath.* 45.4.

<sup>731</sup> Looking at this another way: it could also be the case that the women's decree is procedurally incorrect after all, but that they are not punished because no one has the wit or energy to challenge them. If the Athenians of 392/1 are as weary of litigiousness and politics as Peisetaerus and Euelpides are in 414, perhaps they are just too exhausted to do anything. This weariness would then link back to the problem encountered in *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, where the animals fail to put their foot down and think carefully about the political regimes that are presented to them.

It is surely right to say that this argument is pressing the logic of Aristophanic comedy a bit far; comic fantasy often depends on certain questions not being asked and is at liberty to ignore the fetters of the real world as much as it wants. But it is no secret that Old Comedy deals with many ridiculous things and many serious things. See, for instance, the chorus in *Frogs* 389-90: 'καὶ πολλὰ μὲν γέλοια...πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα.' Likewise, Dicaeopolis says in *Achar.* 498-500, 'εἰ πτωχὸς ὢν ἔπειτ' ἐν Ἀθηναίοις λέγειν μέλλω περὶ τῆς πόλεως, τρυγῶδιαν ποιῶν. τὸ γὰρ δίκαιον οἶδε καὶ τρυγῶδία.' This is why I think it is proper to press the logic of comic fantasy here to some extent because, as will become clear, it does tell us something about the historical significance of the legal reforms made in the late fifth-century.

suited to running Athens than men, it also recalls a section in Plato's *Protagoras*, discussed earlier (cf. pp. 99-100). At 319b, Socrates tells Protagoras:

ὅταν συλλεγῶμεν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ἐπειδὴν μὲν περὶ οἰκοδομίας τι δέη πράξει τὴν πόλιν, τοὺς οἰκοδόμους μεταπεμπομένους συμβούλους περὶ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων, ὅταν δὲ περὶ ναυπηγίας, τοὺς ναυπηγούς, καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα οὕτως

when we are collected for the Assembly, and the city has to deal with an affair of building, we send for builders to advise us on what is proposed to be built; and when it is a case of laying down a ship, we send for shipwrights; and so in all other matters

He continues at 319c:

ἐὰν δὲ τις ἄλλος ἐπιχειρῇ αὐτοῖς συμβουλεύειν ὃν ἐκεῖνοι μὴ οἴονται δημιουργὸν εἶναι...ἀλλὰ καταγελῶσι καὶ θορυβοῦσιν, ἕως ἂν ἢ αὐτὸς ἀποστῇ ὁ ἐπιχειρῶν λέγειν καταθορυβηθείς, ἢ οἱ τοξόται αὐτὸν ἀφελκύσωσιν ἢ ἐξάρωνται κελευόντων τῶν πρυτάνεων

but if anyone else, whom the people do not regard as a craftsman, attempts to advise them...they merely laugh him to scorn and shout him down, until either the speaker retires from his attempt, overborne by the clamor, or [the prytaneis] pull him from his place or turn him out altogether by order of the chair

The same phenomenon takes place in the assembly meeting in *Ecclesiastusae*. When Neocleides gets up to speak, the following happens:<sup>732</sup>

κᾶτ' εὐθέως  
πρῶτος Νεοκλείδης ὁ γλάμων παρείρπυσεν.  
κᾶπειθ' ὁ δῆμος ἀναβοᾷ πόσον δοκεῖς,  
'οὐ δεινὰ τολμᾷν τουτονὶ δημηγορεῖν,  
καὶ ταῦτα περὶ σωτηρίας προκειμένου,  
ὃς αὐτὸς αὐτῷ βλεφαρίδ' οὐκ ἐσώσατο;'

And right away Neocleides the squinter groped his way to the podium to speak first, but the people started to yell as loud as you please, 'Isn't it dreadful that this guy dares to address us on the subject of our salvation no less, when he can't even save his own eyelids?'

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<sup>732</sup> *Eccl.* 397-402.

According to Chremes, the demos makes the same θόρυβος that Socrates refers to in his conversation because they deem Neocleides to be a non-expert on the subject of salvation. For how could someone who cannot even save his own eyelids possibly save an entire city? While it is not entirely clear if Neocleides is removed by the prytaneis or gives up voluntarily because of the shouts from the audience, it is implied that he withdraws from his attempt to speak rather quickly and goes back to his seat.

There is, of course, an argument to be made that Neocleides and Euaeon are unsuccessful because the assembly is full of women that day. As Chremes tells Blepyrus:<sup>733</sup>

πλεῖστος ἀνθρώπων ὄχλος,  
 ὅσος οὐδεπώποτ' ἦλθ' ἀθρόος ἐς τὴν πύκνα.  
 καὶ δῆτα πάντες σκυτοτόμοις ἠκάζομεν  
 ὀρῶντες αὐτούς. οὐ γὰρ ἀλλ' ὑπερφυῶς  
 ὡς λευκοπληθῆς ἦν ἰδεῖν ἠκκλησία

A huge crowd of people showed up en masse at the Pnyx, an all-time record. And you know, we thought they all looked like shoemakers; really, the Assembly was awfully pale-faced to behold.

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<sup>733</sup> *Eccl.* 383-7. Ober 1998: 136 n. 30 points out that “the Greek cultural assumption that ‘women are pale’ [is] deep-seated.”

Greek writers such as Xenophon and Aristotle assert that women are by nature more suited to indoor life (hence the paleness) and men to outdoor life (apart from men who work indoors such as shoemakers). At the same time, as Ober also argues, many Greek authors play with this cultural norm. For instance, Plutarch (*Thes.* 23) tells the story of a military ruse initiated by Theseus: he disguises young Athenian men as women by giving them women’s clothing, re-arranging their hair, and by putting lotions on their skin. He also tells them to stay out of the sun and to take hot baths. In *Ecclesiazusae*, the opposite scenario takes place: the female characters in the play tell Praxagora that they stopped shaving and stood in the sun to get a suntan. Clearly, their ‘suntanning regimen’, as Ober calls it, is not entirely successful since the women’s paleness is commented upon a few times in the play. Firstly, this recalls a point made earlier: the women struggle to act like men, and are unable to cross certain gender-related borders. Secondly, it hints at a problem, which will become clearer in the next section: the Athenian men may find the pale assembly peculiar but evidently not peculiar enough in order to act on it. Instead, they accept the pale-looking Praxagora as a young man, which enables her to continue with her charade. Thirdly, perhaps comparably with Praxagora’s vacillation between male and female speech, Chremes’ account also implies that the appearance of femininity and masculinity is artificial in a way and that it can be adapted if necessary. In Greek drama this is accentuated by the fact that all female parts are played by male actors. On that, see especially Taaffe 1993: 130.

Sommerstein, too, comments: “The Assembly meeting which votes to hand over power to the women is packed with voters who are women in disguise (and many of the men...have been prevented from attending because their wives have ‘borrowed’ their clothes...).”<sup>734</sup> Thus, there is a chance that the audience interrupts the first two speakers not necessarily because they are bad speakers but because they want to make sure that Praxagora’s proposal is heard and approved. Nonetheless, the text still implies that the first two resolutions do not win approval of *anyone* present in the assembly. Chremes does not seem to be particularly impressed, and also Blepyrus says that he would not have voted for Neocleides and Euaeon had he been there. For in regards to Neocleides’ speech he says: σκόροδ’ ὀμοῦ τρίψαντ’ ὀπῶ τιθύμαλλον ἐμβάλοντα τοῦ Λακωνικοῦ σαυτοῦ παραλείφειν τὰ βλέφαρα τῆς ἐσπέρας,’ ἔγωγ’ ἂν εἶπον, εἰ παρὼν ἐτύγγανον. “If I’d been there I’d have said, ‘Grind up garlic and figs and add Spartan spurge, and rub it on your eyelids at bedtime.’”<sup>735</sup> And in regards to Euaeon’s resolution, he asserts:<sup>736</sup>

νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον χρηστά γ’: εἰ δ’ ἐκεῖνά γε  
προσέθηκεν, οὐδεὶς ἀντεχειροτόνησεν ἄν,  
τοὺς ἀλφιταμοιβοὺς τοῖς ἀπόροις τρεῖς χοίνας  
δεῖπνον παρέχειν ἅπασιν ἢ κλάειν μακρά,  
ἵνα τοῦτ’ ἀπέλαυσαν Ναυσικύδους τὰγαθόν.

By Dionysus, what a noble thought! He’d have won unanimous approval if he’d added that grain dealers should give the needy three quarts for their dinner or face harsh punishment. They could have collected that benefit from Nausicydes.

Therefore, while it is fair to assume that Neocleides’ and Euaeon’s *probouleumata* do not gain approval because the women want to make sure that Praxagora’s *probouleuma* is heard, Chremes and the other few men who are arguably present during the meeting, do not seem to

<sup>734</sup> Sommerstein 2009: 216.

<sup>735</sup> *Eccl.* 404-7.

<sup>736</sup> *Eccl.* 422-6.

find the men’s resolutions very convincing either.<sup>737</sup> It is therefore questionable whether their *probouleumata* would be passed even if the women were not present.

There are two more instances of speakers being interrupted, and they can be found in the women’s rehearsal scene at the beginning of the play.<sup>738</sup> In line 144, Praxagora tells the First Woman to go sit down after she has made an unsuccessful attempt at giving a convincing speech: σὺ μὲν βιάδιζε καὶ κάθησ’· οὐδὲν γὰρ εἶ. “You go and sit down. You’re worthless.” The Second Woman is even interrupted twice. Once in line 159 when she says: ὦ νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω—“Oh! By Apollo—” which is the correct oath (since she is in male disguise),<sup>739</sup> but Praxagora is still annoyed with her because she used the wrong oaths beforehand, which is why she replies with: παῦε τοίνυν. “No, stop,” and once in line 169 when Praxagora tells her to go back to her seat: ἄπερρε καὶ σὺ καὶ κάθησ’ ἐντευθενί. Even though this is a rehearsal and not yet the real assembly, it does stress the point that speakers who are not able to advise well on a subject matter struggle to get the attention of the audience.<sup>740</sup>

Praxagora, however, as has been made clear earlier, does have the expertise of Socrates’ ‘craftsman,’ for her language comes from an area with which she is familiar. Thus,

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<sup>737</sup> That being said, Euaeon’s *probouleuma* actually does resemble that of the women in a way. His appeal to the polis that the rich should give to the poor and open their doors for those who are in need of shelter reminds us of Praxagora’s proposal to share all the common goods and to tear down the walls, so everyone can live together. This feeds into the unequal distribution of wealth in Athenian society, a theme that also appears in *Wealth*. Blepyrus reflects on this in his response to Euaeon’s proposal when he says that Eueaeon would have been successful had he added that grain dealers should give the needy money for their dinner. This could be another reason why Eueaeon is unsuccessful in the assembly: wealthy Athenians feared that the poorer citizens could use their legislative power to enforce economic equality. (See Ober 1998: 148). The feeling of unfairness based on the unequal distribution of wealth in society also appears in *More*, when he echoes Plutarch’s idealised interpretation of Lycurgus’ reforms. (cf. pp. 21-2).

<sup>738</sup> Rhodes 2004: 227.

<sup>739</sup> See Sommerstein 2014: 321 n. 46 and Sommerstein 2009: 19-20 n. 18.

<sup>740</sup> This also recalls Lysistrata’s strategy discussed earlier (cf. pp. 223-4), when she bases her argument on the domestic sphere because that is what she knows best.

when she gives her speech, the demos considers her an expert, for she is able to describe how the women would govern (just as a builder is able to describe the ways in which he constructs buildings). Unlike Neocleides, and unlike the two women during the women's practice, Praxagora is not interrupted, for she comes across as both competent and favourable.<sup>741</sup> Yes, this may be because the assembly is full of women that day but it stresses nonetheless that a) Praxagora seems to follow protocol when proposing her decree to the assembly, and b) that she delivers her speech better than some of the other speakers deliver theirs.

#### **VI.b. The mutability of *psephismata* and *nomoi***

The decree of the women thus seems to be procedurally correct, or at least is not exposed within the play as being procedurally incorrect, however this does not answer the question whether the women are legally allowed to alter existing laws in the first place. The short answer to this question would be no, since in fourth-century Athens women are not allowed to participate in legal matters and attend assembly.<sup>742</sup> However, in *Ecclesiazusae*, the women are dressed as men and the few men present in the assembly neither recognise the incongruity of the women's costume nor do they question the 'pale young man' (i.e.

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<sup>741</sup> On interruptions in the assembly, see, for example, Hansen 1987, Tacon 2001, and Rhodes 2004.

<sup>742</sup> This point will be raised later on as well, but it is worth noting here too that outside comedy Athenian men never seriously considered the possibility that women might attend and vote in the assembly, and therefore never thought it necessary to actively keep them from doing so. Additionally, it was never thought necessary to specify that the rights of an Athenian citizen were, in fact, the rights of a *male* Athenian citizen since that was implied in the laws, which treated women as legal minors. Likewise, it was presumably not thought necessary to specify that only *biological* males could be citizens since, again, few Athenians would have considered the possibility that anything else could ever be the case. This links back to a) the debate on how much the male disguise has really changed the women (as shown earlier, it has not changed them very much at all), and b) deeply cherished assumptions that keep the Athenian men from considering the option that women might have made their way into assembly.

Praxagora) when ‘he’ gets up to speak. This unfortunate misperception may be linked to the general anxiety about the justice of any decree leaving the assembly and an apparent confusion about a few new legal procedures, which had been introduced in 410 and 403 respectively.<sup>743</sup> Indeed (and this is based on the legal allusions which I adduce to highlight the play’s admixture of *realia* and fantasy), it is this very combination of misperception, anxiety, and confusion that has the potential to demonstrate that the women’s decree may not be as illegal as it initially seems, because the new legal situation actually leaves the possibility open.

In regards to the newly introduced legal procedures: in 410, the democrats and oligarchs decide to establish an *anagrapheis ton nomon* in order to collect and publish all existing laws. This decision was triggered by the constitutional struggles the Athenians experienced after the defeat in Sicily in 413 and the oligarchical revolution in 411. During those times, “both democrats and oligarchs had claimed for their side the ‘ancestral constitution,’” which led the Athenians to become more conscious of how tricky the concept of *nomos* could be.<sup>744</sup> Ober states:<sup>745</sup>

After the end of the war, the Athenians realized that the existing *nomoi* did not provide an adequate statutory basis for government, and they initiated a new and complicated constitutional procedure (*nomothesia*) for making laws. *Psephismata* would still be passed by the demos in the Assembly, as before. But now *nomoi* would be made by specially lotteried committees. Any *psephisma* that was contrary to an established *nomos* could be challenged and overturned in the people’s courts.

The fact that any *psephisma* that went against existing *nomoi* could now be challenged and annulled, is based on two legal procedures established in 403: (i) the “public prosecution for

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<sup>743</sup> This anxiety already appears in *Birds* 1040-5, when the decree-seller attempts to sell decrees to the newly found bird-city but is quickly asked to leave by Peisetaerus.

<sup>744</sup> Hansen 1991: 162.

<sup>745</sup> Ober 1998: 145. See also Hansen 1991: 163.

having proposed and carried an unsuitable *nomos* (*graphe nomon me epitedeion theinai*),<sup>746</sup> and (ii) “the public action against an unconstitutional *psephisma*”<sup>747</sup> (*graphe paranomon*). That is, people who propose laws and decrees that are contrary to existing law can now be prosecuted. The same procedure can be used “against laws or decrees that [are] perfectly in consonance with the rest of the laws and correctly passed, but which [are] regarded as unsuitable or...damaging to the democracy and the people.”<sup>748</sup>

It is important to note that before the beginning of the fourth-century, the words *nomos* and *psephisma* are being used rather interchangeably, as is, for instance, the case in *Clouds* and *Birds*. Pheidippides’ new *nomos*, that sons may beat their fathers, is based on an old ψήφισμα of the cocks and other animals; and the Ψηφισματοπώλης attempts to sell new laws (νόμους νέους) to the citizens of νεφελοκοκκυγία.<sup>749</sup> However, in the period of 403/2 – 322/1, the same period in which *Ecclesiazusae* is performed, there is a sharper distinction between the two terms.<sup>750</sup> Firstly, *nomoi* are now passed by the *nomothetai*, and *psephismata* by the *ecclesia*. Secondly, *nomoi* are now the stronger force: if a new *psephisma* is inconsistent with a current *nomos*, it can be declared invalid with a *graphe paranomon*.

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<sup>746</sup> Hansen 1991: 175; Demosthenes, *Ag. Tim.* 24.33; Aristotle, *Const. Ath.*, 59.2.

<sup>747</sup> Hansen 1978: 317.

<sup>748</sup> Hansen 1991: 175. It is worth noting that law-making in the late fifth-century and fourth-century was a big project, which went through several phases. For a good synopsis of the different phases, see MacDowell 1975: 73-4. For a good account on the establishment of the *nomothetai* and the historical significance of it, see Ostwald 1986: 509-524. Indeed, the subject is rather large and controversial, too large and controversial for it to be discussed in detail here, but it is exactly this controversy that forms part of the plot of *Ecclesiazusae*.

<sup>749</sup> *Birds* 1035; 1037 and *Clouds* 1428-9.

<sup>750</sup> Hansen 1978: 317. As will become clear in the next paragraphs, despite this new ideology, which contrasts supposedly permanent *nomoi* with ephemeral *psephismata*, it is still not entirely clear what counts as a *nomos* and what does not. The distinction thus remains rather fluid, which is especially true in the case of *Ecclesiazusae*.

Thirdly, *nomoi* are intended to cover long-term affairs concerning Athens while *psephismata* are meant to deal with ephemeral matters.<sup>751</sup>

In the case of *Ecclesiazusae*, however, both the new distinction between *nomoi* and *psephisma*, as well as the new legal procedures, are potentially problematic. Considering that these changes had been made only a few years prior to the production of the play, it is fair to assume that many Athenians are still confused about them by the time the comedy is put on. This is presumably also why there is no clear difference between *nomoi* and *psephisma* in the play; instead, similarly to older plays, the two terms are merged into one. As Ober writes, “Aristophanes deliberately jumbles the distinction between decrees of the Assembly and *nomoi*...[and] in several passages...the hags treat the terms *psephisma* and *nomos* as if they were simple synonyms....”<sup>752</sup> This is also evident when looking at the introduction of the women’s decree: it is introduced using the methods that are used to introduce a *psephisma* but, unlike *psephismata*, it is meant to last indefinitely.

The women, therefore, may follow protocol when submitting their decree to the assembly but it is the wrong procedure used at that particular moment because it is only meant to be used when introducing *psephismata*, not *nomoi*, which suggests that their decree is indeed questionable. Ironically, this questionability recalls the rationale for the gynaeocracy because it brings to mind the general anxiety about the justice of certain decrees leaving the assembly. It also recalls a point Praxagora made earlier: if legal terms and legal action are confusing and cause for anxiety, why not get rid of them once and for all? This would also solve two problems mentioned at the beginning of the comedy: first of all, the fact that many

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<sup>751</sup> Pseudo-Plato, *Definitions* 415b and Nightingale 1999: 105. Note that these revisions have created a great deal of scholarly controversy, “especially concerning the changes in the power of the assembly, and the (alleged) shift ‘from popular sovereignty to the sovereignty of law.’” (Nightingale 1999: 105-6). See Ostwald 1986 and Sealey 1987 who argue in favour of this shift in power, Ober 1989 and Todd 1993 who argue against it.

<sup>752</sup> Ober 1998: 145-6.

Athenians seem to attend assembly for less than patriotic reasons would no longer be an issue, and secondly, alternative political proposals such as the one that led to the coup in 411 would no longer take place.

That being said, it is this scenario that shows once again that Praxagora, like Lysistrata, is very clever. Especially, when we read her fictional legal actions against what we know about contemporary legal reforms and practices, it allows us to lend nuance to our interpretation of her and characterize her as someone who takes advantage of potentially apprehensive and flustered people in order to establish her government. Like Lysistrata, Praxagora can be related to the current situation, as she uses the foibles of Athenian democracy to her advantage.<sup>753</sup> Both characters build their initial plan on a loophole in Athenian society: Lysistrata knows that neither Athenian women nor men are able to abstain from sex for a long time, which is why a decision in regards to military affairs will be made quickly. Similarly, Praxagora—and again, this is related to the legal setting I offer to the play—situates her new regime within the confusions arising from recent changes made to the processes of enacting laws and decrees. Thus, the two women provide a subtle distinction to our analyses of the plays when we situate them within these loopholes and their clever exploitations thereof.<sup>754</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> Cf. Cratinus' *Pylaea* (fr. Photius p. 595.12), "wise men should turn the present situation to their advantage." (ἄνδρας σοφοὺς χρῆ τὸ παρὸν πρᾶγμα καλῶς εἰς δύναμιν τίθεσθαι).

<sup>754</sup> Lysistrata's level of intelligence is highlighted further by the fact that she not only recognises this loophole but also the element of collective fear that seems to come with it, which brings to mind Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 2.5.1: "for men do not fear all evils...but only such as involve great pain or destruction, and only if they appear to be not far off but near at hand and threatening, for men do not fear things that are very remote." (οὐ γὰρ πάντα τὰ κακὰ φοβοῦνται...ἀλλ' ὅσα λύπας μεγάλας ἢ φθορὰς δύναται, καὶ ταῦτ' ἐὰν μὴ πόρρω ἀλλὰ σύνεγγυς φαίνεται ὥστε μέλλειν. τὰ γὰρ πόρρω σφόδρα οὐ φοβοῦνται). By (comically) recognising a fear that derives from the men's (and women's) home, Lysistrata reflects on this Aristotelian notion and, like many orators before and after her, she identifies a specific danger that scares her audience.

Still, regardless of any potential confusion about the new legal processes, the women's decree does pose the question: are the Athenians theoretically able to prosecute Praxagora, making use of the procedure established in 403, for going against existing law? Considering this legal method is officially recognised by the time the play is put on, the answer to the question is yes. However, any *graphe paranomon* must be initiated by a private citizen; if no citizen starts one, the *psephisma* is valid regardless of how undemocratic or unconstitutional it may be.<sup>755</sup> There is no mentioning in the play of a citizen contemplating taking legal action against the women's decree, and while this may prompt some readers to ask whether the whole question is doubtful in this case, it does add further nuance to our unravelling of the play's interpretative ambiguities, in my opinion. It is clear that comic absurdities are not fettered to the realities of Athenian legal practices like this, but it is also clear that comic fantasy includes serious elements (cf. p. 265 n. 731), which is why, I think, it is lucrative to adduce this apparent lack of contemplation to the play.

Particularly, reading this (again) against what we know about contemporary legal reforms, it opens up further avenues for how contemporary Athenians might have reacted to the comedy's political fantasy. I am inclined to suggest that the citizens in the play do not offer a *graphe paranomon* either because of their unfamiliarity with the new legal procedure or because by abolishing all existing law, Praxagora likely also abolishes the right to launch a *graphe paranomon*.<sup>756</sup>

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On a related note, this section also recalls Peisetaerus' strategy in *Birds* (cf. pp. 152-5; 161), when he recognises the sophistication and power of language, and uses it to his advantage. That being said, ultimately Praxagora is much more of a revolutionary than Lysistrata and Peisetaerus are because she seeks to overturn the status quo, whereas the other two seek to restore and/or keep it.

<sup>755</sup> Hansen 1978: 325.

<sup>756</sup> Cf. Ober 1998: 139 n. 38, who writes: "The women presumably fear a *graphe paranomon*, the standard legal means by which decrees of the Assembly could be invalidated...but since the women intend to close down the lawcourts...this legal remedy will soon be cut off."

Presumably, by abolishing the right to launch a *graphe paranomon*, Praxagora is also exploiting the Athenian people's weariness. As fond as they are of lawsuits and litigiousness, it is clear that they are also tired of dealing with these things (which is, after all, also the initial reason why Peisetaerus and Euelpides leave Athens). My reading of *Ecclēsiazusae* (and the subtle allusions I make to Athenian legal history) shows us, in a somewhat ironic manner, that there will never be a *graphe paranomon* if people are politically weary by presenting a character who abolishes the right to launch one in the first place. This also feeds into one of the key points on Praxagora's political agenda: the *graphe paranomon* is arguably a key tool in the male political game of litigiousness and aggression among rival political parties. By cutting off this legal remedy, Praxagora recalls the foundation of her proto-communist government that does not include different political cliques and opinions, but only one political programme that is meant to be fitting for all.

This brings to mind the problems caused by the diverse rhetorical styles in the *Statesman* and *Lysistrata*, where different political cliques struggle to find a common language. In the world Praxagora creates, these issues are no longer relevant. Likewise, her solution is in line with More's rationale for Utopia, where he prohibits political factions and private debates in order to prevent tyrannical groups from arising. The Utopians' high opinion of simple legal matters ('the most simple and apparent sense of the law is open to everyone')<sup>757</sup> echoes that of Praxagora, when she advocates a simple (ἀπλόος) legal system. Furthermore, her reasoning emphasises the fault the Utopians find with other nations, whose 'mass of incomprehensibly intricate laws prevents them from having a straightforward and fair government.'<sup>758</sup>

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<sup>757</sup> *Utopia*, 87.

<sup>758</sup> *Utopia*, 86-7. Cf. pp. 253-5.

Nonetheless, Praxagora's actions do pose the question: is she allowed to propose (unsuitably) the abolition of the law that is meant to keep people from making unsuitable proposals?<sup>759</sup> When we continue to read the play's fantasy against what we know of the legal practices in Aristophanes' time, and acknowledge that comedy deals with *both* ridiculous and serious things (καὶ πολλὰ μὲν γέλοιά...πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα, *Frogs* 389-90) even though it is obviously not bound to the realities of many things, the short answer to this is no. Praxagora is not a male citizen, and thus she is not allowed to propose decrees; and she is not a member of the *nomothetai* either, which means she is not allowed to make laws. Moreover, as stated above, while the decree is procedurally correct, Praxagora does not acknowledge the distinction between *psephisma* and *nomos* and their different legal processes. Thus, her decree may indeed be considered illegal.

But looking at it another way, the question could also be answered with a yes: persuasive Athenians once established the existing legal system, so why should not the same persuasion methods be used to abolish it and propose something else instead? This response brings to mind a conversation Strepsiades and Pheidippides have in *Clouds*, performed approximately thirty years prior to *Ecclesiazusae*, where Pheidippides tells his father that it was only a man who came up with the law that prohibits a son to beat his father. Therefore, another man can propose a new law that allows sons to beat their fathers.<sup>760</sup> Pheidippides'

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<sup>759</sup> As noted on p. 272, 'unsuitable' here (μὴ ἐπιτήδειον) means not fit for, or favourable to, democracy. μὴ ἐπιτήδειον also frequently appears in other Greek texts. For example, at 5.81, Thucydides uses it in order to refer to the establishment of an oligarchy, which is suitable for Sparta (καὶ ὀλιγαρχία ἐπιτηδεῖα τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις κατέστη); and in Lysias' *Against Agoratus* 13.51, it is used to state that Agoratus worked against the interests of the Athenian people (καὶ οὐκ ἐπιτήδεια τῷ δήμῳ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ πράττοντας). Like ἀπλόος discussed on pp. 257-9, μὴ ἐπιτήδειον indicates that Praxagora's government may not necessarily bode well for the Athenian people. Cf. p. 109 for Socrates' use of ἀρτίου in *Prot.*

<sup>760</sup> *Clouds* 1420-1424. There is a similar law in *Birds*, which states that it is admirable to strangle and bite one's father because that is what is written on the pillars of the storks (1347; 1353-4). This suggests again that Aristophanes does not hesitate to parody sophistic

statement can be linked to the continual jokes in Aristophanic comedy about the Athenians' fondness for lawsuits and litigiousness, a theme that is also present in *Ecclesiazusae*. Indeed, Pheidippides states what Praxagora seems to think as well: if someone creates a law, why should someone else not challenge its legitimacy? Or, if someone founds a court of law, like Athena in the *Eumenides*, why should someone else not abolish it like Praxagora does in *Ecclesiazusae*?<sup>761</sup>

However, in this case, it is more complicated than that: Praxagora wants her challenge to be the final challenge in order to stop the constant going back and forth at law once and for all.<sup>762</sup> Consequently, she would be the last Athenian (for a while at least) who could call into question existing law's validity.

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arguments, which question codes of conduct among human beings, by drawing comic parallels with animals. See Quass 1971: 25-26 and Dunbar 1997: 653. The comic argument clearly brings to mind Callicles' opinion in the *Gorgias* and the sophists' thinking in general, namely that it is possible to propose an alternative argument to any proposition.

See Gardner 1989: 59-60, who notes that this comic law could also refer to the perturbation adult male Athenians felt towards the end of the fifth-century about their relationships with younger Athenians, particularly the younger's apparent lack of respect for the elderly. Strepsiades arguably refers to a law attributed to Solon here which punishes sons who mistreat their parents with disfranchisement. See also MacDowell 1978: 92.

<sup>761</sup> This sentiment goes against Athena's words in *Eum.* 693-4, when she founds the court of law and says that citizens should refrain from polluting the law with (bad) innovations. It also goes against *Pol.* 1269a12-18, where Aristotle asserts that it is usually better to refrain from changing laws even when the magistrates may be in error. He bases his opinion on people's bad habit of abrogating laws easily (a concern that also appears in *Eccl.*) and concludes that this bad habit does not teach people anything except how to disobey their authorities.

See also *Const. Ath.* 7.2, where he says that Solon made his laws binding, and thus unalterable, for a hundred years. This reference also appears in Plutarch's *Life of Solon* 25.1 and Herodotus 1.29. (More, who clearly voiced his concerns about monarchs who tamper with laws whenever they wish, might have supported this). Similar opinions can be found in Demosthenes' *Ag. Lep.* 20.90-2, where he views the frequent changes made to the laws as a sign of disorder, and *Ag. Tim.* 24.139, where he tells of the Locrians who have everyone who proposes a new law legislate with a halter around their neck. If the new law is accepted, the one proposing survives; if it is not accepted, the halter is drawn tight and they die. Lastly, see Antiphon *De Choreut.* 6.2 and Thucydides 3.37.3 for other examples, and Harris 2013: 324-5.

<sup>762</sup> Pollux and the Antiatticist mention the comic poet Thugenides, who, if the name is correctly restored on the victors' list for the Dionysia, won with a play called *Jurors* around 440. (Storey 2011: 355). One of the few surviving lines is the following: τῖ

It is here where it becomes clear once again that *Ecclesiazusae*, like *Lysistrata* and *Birds*, is largely about λόγοι and πειθώ—words, speeches, and persuasion. For we are once again presented with a character who claims to know what is best for the *polis*. Certainly, both *Lysistrata* and *Praxagora* believe that they have not only got the mind but also the eloquence to do the men’s job for them—and, as already stated in the section on *Lysistrata*, not just do it for them, but do it better than them. In the case of *Ecclesiazusae*, this is highlighted by the seemingly utopian ending, for *Praxagora* accomplishes what the democrats hoped to achieve when introducing the new legal procedures in 410 and 403: avoidance of both oligarchic coups and propositions of unsuitable laws that are damaging to democracy. (After all, if there is no democracy, no damage can be done to it).<sup>763</sup>

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ὄγᾱθ’ ἀντιδικοῦμεν ἀλλήλοις ἔτι; “Why do we still go back and forth at law, my friend?” (Photius, b, Sz, a2096. Trans. Buis). The play is very fragmented, which makes it difficult to work with, but this surviving line may still be used to a) underline *Praxagora*’s rationale for her regime and b) point at *Aristophanes*’ jokes about the Athenians’ love for lawsuits and litigiousness.

See also *Math.* 2.34-5, where *Sextus Empiricus* writes: “where rhetoric is nonexistent or very rare, laws remain unchanged, but among those who admit it laws change daily, for example at Athens...” (παρ’ οἷς ἢ οὐδ’ ὄλωσ ἢ σπανίως ἔστι ῥητορική, τοὺς νόμους ἀσαλεύτους μένειν, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς προσιεμένοις αὐτὴν ὀσημέραι νεοχμοῦσθαι, ὥσπερ καὶ παρ’ Ἀθηναίοις...). *Sextus* attributes this to *Platon* who, allegorically, tells of a traveller who goes away for three months and does not recognise his city when he comes back because the laws have changed so much.

<sup>763</sup> Linking this back to the point made earlier (cf. p. 265 n. 731), namely that the Athenians in this play are perhaps as weary of politics as *Peisetaerus* and *Euelpides* are in *Birds*, the abolition of democracy could indeed be a good thing. If the point here is that democracy is about people deciding what they want, maybe politics and responsibility for decision-making is precisely what the male characters in *Ecclesiazusae* do not want. This eagerness to vote for a politician who will abolish politics is also evident in *Blepyrus*’ and *Chremes*’ dialogue in lines 460-4, when *Blepyrus* joyfully expresses that he will no longer have to get up early in the morning to attend assembly but instead can stay home all day. *Blepyrus*’ response is slightly inconsistent with *Praxagora*’s declaration to abolish lawsuits, but at this point in the play, she has not yet told him about her decision—that does not happen until line 656—so it is possible that he and *Chremes* simply assume that jury duty will be handed over to the women. Or, as *Sommerstein* asserts, “not only *Blepyrus* but even the...neighbour find it impossible to imagine an Athens without lawsuits.” *Sommerstein* 1998: 197.

This would link to the joke in *Clouds* 207-8, when *Strepsiades* looks at a map of Athens and cannot believe that it is Athens because he does not see any law-courts in session

This is why it is attractive to answer the question, whether Praxagora is allowed to do what she does, with a yes. As questionable as the foundation of her regime may be, law is a social construction and the fact that the other characters do not make use of their right to start a *graphe paranomon* against her, even though they may theoretically be able to, does suggest that her rule can be rightly seen as the new law of Athens. Looking at it this way, it becomes clear that the Athenians' fondness for legal action is taken to a whole other level in the comedy. In fact, I argue that it has the potential to be read as a more political play than *Lysistrata* because it shows where the power of persuasion, in combination with confusion and anxiety, may lead. Ober argues similarly:<sup>764</sup>

*Ecclesiazusae* is emphatically political comedy in that it derives a good deal of its humor from the foibles of democracy—from democracy's deep-seated institutional and ideological structures and from confusions arising from recent constitutional tinkering with the enactment of law.

*Ecclesiazusae* therefore is not necessarily as absurd as one may think, for its comic logic is the juridical logic of late fifth-century and early fourth-century Athens taken to an extreme. More importantly, it expresses something of importance about the characters' historical, social, and legal environment. For it is clear that the changes to the legal system could not be made without the willing cooperation of the council and the assembly, which once again points at the role of deceptive political jargon and potentially confusing procedures of law in the decision-making process. We are presented with the comic paradox of men who willingly sign off a decree that strips them of political power, and the audience in turn is presented with an equally comic paradox of a world that is engendered by a procedurally correct decree that abolishes the proposition of future decrees.

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on it. A similar joke appears in *Birds* 110, when the hoopoe, upon hearing why Peisetaerus and Euelpides left Athens, expresses his surprise that there are Athenians who oppose law-courts.

<sup>764</sup> Ober 1998: 152-3.

In this vein, Aristophanes provides a comic narrative of contemporary Athenian democracy and its legal system, and he shows us that a conventional procedure may lead to an unconventional political order. In this case, the new political order is so unconventional that it leads to the collapse of institutionalized law itself. Ruffell argues that, “comic form, with its absurdist, comparative, and self-reflexive moves, anchors itself in the political and cultural context, even as it constructs and develops anti-realist worlds, scenarios, and motivations.”<sup>765</sup> I believe the same can be said for *Ecclesiazusae*: the basic story of the play, i.e. women in power, may be absurd to the fourth-century audience, and the juridical logic may be taken to a comic extreme; however, the legal language of the play is not absurd, for it is deeply anchored in the political and legal world of its time.

### **VI.c. The tragicomic aspect of the play**

The comic paradox, and the usage of contemporary Athenian legal language, then emerges as a tragicomic narrative of contemporary political-judicial conditions. Aristophanes presents to the audience a questionable charade, based in the legal world of early fourth-century Athens, which works out not only because of confusing legal procedures but also because of deeply established assumptions about a speaker’s nature. For as incongruous as Praxagora’s costume may be to the audience, the few men present in the assembly do not realise that the ‘pale young man’ speaking is, in fact, a woman. (It is, however, hard to imagine that any of them would ever suppose that ‘he’ might be a woman—as stated on p. 270 n. 742, it is unlikely that even the most innovative Athenian at the time would think that women might make their way into assembly).

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<sup>765</sup> Ruffell 2011: 429.

At the end of the play, the audience is presented with the story of a society that is dismantled due to assumptions, confusing legal procedures, and deception by both sight and sound. They witness Chremes and the other men accept as authoritative a speech, full of political jargon, given by a woman in disguise, which ultimately leads to the breakdown of the conventional hierarchical order and institutionalized law. They also see the Athenians march into the same trap that Praxagora scolds them for always marching into: they employ a scoundrel as their leader.<sup>766</sup> It may seem odd (albeit undoubtedly funny) to the audience that the men in the assembly do not question the mass of pale people and that they readily accept the pale-looking Praxagora as a young man. But again, it is this oddity that reinforces the previous statement: when assumptions collide with a persuasive political proposal, which is shaped by deception on many levels, the political order can be fundamentally altered.<sup>767</sup>

At the same time, despite the fundamental alteration of the Athenian political order, this employment of a scoundrel (i.e. Praxagora) shows that not much has changed after all. Praxagora may be a revolutionary, and thus not necessarily a scoundrel in the old mould, but she does use scoundrelly tricks, presumably because she knows they have worked in the past and are thus likely to work again.<sup>768</sup> Consequently, even with the revolutionary aspects of the story, the ending of *Ecclesiazusae* seems to provide us once again with a ring composition which features Athenians who end up right where they started. Their false optimism, engendered by λόγιοι and πειθῶ, recalls that seen in *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and also *Animal Farm*, as it leads a large group of people to exchange one bad leader for another once again. As is

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<sup>766</sup> *Eccl.* 176-7.

<sup>767</sup> This links back to the Gorgianic model of perception, for it matters once again, to a certain extent anyway, who you are, and who you say you are, and whether others are able to know whether you speak the truth.

<sup>768</sup> This feeds into her appropriation of male speech, which she learned by listening to her husband and other orators on the Pnyx. This is how she knows that the kind of rhetoric she uses will work because she has seen it before.

the case in the other texts, it is also this optimism that quickly becomes the weapon of criticism when Aristophanes (and Orwell) use it in order to appeal to the audience's intelligence and integrity. In *Ecclesiazusae*, this appeal is all the more telling because it is even more based on Athenian legal and political values than it is in *Birds* and *Lysistrata*.

This is why I think it would be a mistake to dismiss *Ecclesiazusae* as a 'lunatic and illogical' play that shows that Aristophanes is 'aging and overtired,' 'elderly, peevish, and irritated,' or indeed "a broken man who could sink to the tiresome dirtiness of *Ecclesiazusae*" and who may have 'had a stroke.'<sup>769</sup> As fantastic, hyperbolic, and absurd some of the play's content may be, its legal allusions, which I adduce to illuminate the play's admixture of fantasy and realism, are of importance, for they point at the historical and social significance of the reforms that have been made to the Athenian legal system in the fifth-century. Certainly, by playing with the city's juridical and institutional structures, Aristophanes brings the fictive world of comedy into the political and legal realm of Athens, as he does in *Birds* and *Lysistrata*. By doing so, he may even lead the audience "to entertain ideas which renovate, reiterate, develop, or re-create their city and its inhabitants and which can be mapped back onto their actual counterparts."<sup>770</sup>

## VII. The future prospects of Praxagora's regime

At the end of the comedy, the essential question for the establishment of Praxagora's gynaeocracy is this: can we be sure that the new rule will last, and that it will actually break the cycles of recurrent political events? Praxagora is overly confident—and stays true to Aristophanic fashion by portraying this confidence clearly—but what are the future prospects

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<sup>769</sup> Zeitlin 1999a: 176; Murray 1933: 181; MacDowell 1995: 308; Taylor 1926: 210; Dover 1972: 195 n. 7. Note that Dover's remark is in regards to both *Ecclesiazusae* and *Wealth*.

<sup>770</sup> Ruffell 2011: 430.

of her regime? Zeitlin and Ober & Strauss assert, "...despite the observance of formal comic conventions in the structure of the plot, the ambiguities at the end suggest that 'the play offers no answer as to whether the new regime was a success or a failure.'"<sup>771</sup> However, I believe the plot of the play actually might offer an answer to that question, albeit only covertly. Specifically, when looking at the story of *Ecclesiazusae* in relation to other stories about female dominated societies, both Greek and barbarian, we are in a position to assume that Praxagora's matriarchal government is actually rather ephemeral and bound to fail.

A first indication for this is the chaotic ending of the comedy, which is triggered not only by the collapse of institutionalized law, the abolition of law-courts and assembly meetings, the changes made to the conventional hierarchy and sexual roles, but also by the obsolescence of monogamous marriage. This outcome, which clearly displays a radical departure from the conventional Athenian model of social and political organization at that time, brings to mind the myth of matriarchy, which, according to Bamberger, belongs to "a prior and chaotic era before the present social order was established."<sup>772</sup> For, "the Rule of Women, instead of heralding a promising future, harks back to a past darkened by repeated failures."<sup>773</sup> Or, as Merrill puts it, "the ancient matriarchies were not part of a Golden Age but rather something which had to be destroyed in order for civilization as patriarchy to exist."<sup>774</sup>

The gynaecocratic rule of *Ecclesiazusae* recalls this dark past of matriarchy not only by taking us back "to the pre-legal world of the *Oresteia* where force and violence had to

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<sup>771</sup> Zeitlin 1999a: 175. (Zeitlin quotes Ober & Strauss 1990: 269 here).

<sup>772</sup> Bamberger 1974: 276. Cf. Dowden 1995: 44.

<sup>773</sup> Bamberger 1974: 280. This conclusion primarily concerns the message of South American myths of matriarchy, but is also applicable to both the ending of *Ecclesiazusae* and the myth of the Amazons.

<sup>774</sup> Merrill 1979: 14. For a counterargument, see Bachofen 1967, who argues that matriarchy was the first form of a truly ordered society, which replaced an anarchic time of promiscuity and chaos.

suffice for the enactment of justice until the establishment of law courts in Athens,”<sup>775</sup> but also by dismantling the institution of monogamous marriage.<sup>776</sup> It also brings to mind other female dominated societies, which evoke the myth of matriarchy in a similar manner. Specifically, the myth, and the recollection of it in the accounts discussed here, stress social tensions, which are present in Greek society. At the same time, however, it also endorses the polis through Athenian thinking. This is especially evident in Herodotus’ version of the myth of the Amazons, and in the myth of the Lemnian women as told by Apollonius of Rhodes. For even though these stories represent the opposite of ideal fifth-century Athenian life, it is possible to learn about the Athenian self by examining the ‘Other’ these stories represent. This becomes particularly clear when investigating the Amazons’ marriage with the Scythians, and the Lemnians’ marriage with the Argonauts.<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> Fletcher 2012: 137. After all, as mentioned earlier, when asked how she intends to handle potential confrontations, Praxagora asserts that she will make use of (comic) violence in order to ensure justice. See *Eccl.* 249-60.

<sup>776</sup> Note that here and in the subsequent sections, I rely on Merrill’s definitions of matriarchy and patriarchy, and “define ‘matriarchy’ as a society in which an equal or greater amount of authority is vested in women than in men and in which descent is traced through the female line. The term ‘patriarchy’ will refer to any society in which primary authority is controlled by men, with descent and inheritance traced through the male line.” Merrill 1979: 13. While it is not entirely clear whether Praxagora establishes matrilineal descent, she does abolish the patrilineal succession of property in lines 587-594, which stems from her proposal that everyone should own everything in common.

Further note that due to the specific word-limit to which I am obliged to adhere, I will not include a discussion of non-monogamous relationships in Plato’s *Rep.* (except for a brief note on p. 291 n. 793) despite their relevance to the following passages. I really wish to lay the debate of the revolutionary social organisation of Kallipolis on one side and focus instead on the historical, mythical, comic, and modern texts presented below; but it is clear that parts of the *Rep.* could convincingly be added, and that the consequences of the abolition of marriage in the Platonic text fit in with the hypotheses presented here.

<sup>777</sup> This is in line with Foley’s rationale for *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, as she “wanted to understand how tragic women were used to think about the social order and how they helped men confront intractable social and philosophical problems.” See Foley 2001: 13-14.

## VII.a. Herodotus' Amazons

Let us begin with Herodotus' version of the myth of the Amazons, and look at the Amazons' marriage with the Scythians. At Herodotus 4.115, the young Scythian men return to the Amazons, after having obtained their share of their property from their parents, in order to form a community with them. The women welcome them back with the following words:

ἡμέας ἔχει φόβος τε καὶ δέος ὅκως χρή οἰκέειν ἐν τῷδε τῷ χώρῳ, τοῦτο μὲν ὑμέας ἀποστερησάσας πατέρων, τοῦτο δὲ γῆν τὴν ὑμετέρεην δηλησαμένας πολλά. ἀλλ' ἐπεῖτε ἀξιοῦτε ἡμέας γυναῖκας ἔχειν, τάδε ποιέετε ἅμα ἡμῖν: φέρετε ἐξαναστέωμεν ἐκ τῆς γῆς τῆσδε καὶ περήσαντες Τάναιν ποταμὸν οἰκέωμεν.

We're very anxious about having to live here. It's not just that we've separated you from your parents, but also that we've done a lot of damage to this country of yours. Since you want us to be your wives, let's move together away from here and find somewhere to live on the other side of the Tanais River.

This proposition to form a community together is important because it links, as will become clear, to the concept of patriarchal marriage, the pillar of Athenian stability and order. Before the Amazons meet the young Scythian men they are untamed and *oiorpata*, killers of men, who invade Cremni (the country of the Scythians), steal horses, and fight the older Scythians in battle.<sup>778</sup> After the battle, the older Scythians decide against killing the women; instead, they tell their young men to pursue the Amazons and have children with them. The young men do as they are told and cautiously follow the Amazons, retreating whenever they turn to attack. Eventually, a Scythian happens to come across an Amazon alone and when she does

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<sup>778</sup> In regards to *oiorpata*, Asheri 2007: 659 writes: "in the first part it is possible to discern the Iranian *vira-* = 'male, man', but the second part is reminiscent rather of *pati-* = 'lord'. Penrose, drawing from How&Wells, argues similarly: "...*oior* may be cognate to the Persian *vira* [man], whereas *pata* may be related to the Persian *patayo*, which means 'master,' rather than killer. According to this theory, *oiorpata* meant 'masters of men,' not 'man-killers.' Penrose 2016: 146. See also How&Wells 1928: 340. Elderkin, on the other hand, argues otherwise. While he does think that *oior* is cognate to the Latin *vir*, he does not believe that *pata* is related to the Persian *pati* or *patayo*. Rather, he argues, *pata* is a noun, which is based on the Greek πῆω, παίω, 'to smite.' This is why, he asserts, "the compound...means what Herodotus says it meant 'man-smiter, i.e. man-killer.'" Elderkin 1935: 344.

not send him away, they have intercourse. They agree to meet again the next day and to bring a friend; in this manner, the Scythians ‘tamed the remaining Amazons’ (καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐκτιλώσαντο τὰς λοιπὰς τῶν Ἀμαζόνων).<sup>779</sup>

This ‘taming’ process marks the beginning of the Amazons’ relationship with the Scythians, and is the stepping-stone towards a more ordered society. Comparably with Tereus, who tames the birds in *Birds* by teaching them Greek, so they are no longer barbarian, the Scythian men teach the Amazons their language and have sex with them in order to guide them towards a less barbarian, and more civilized, life.<sup>780</sup> Both taming processes can be linked to certain Athenian values, specifically to the Athenian idea of a well-ordered society. In particular, the birds begin to resemble Athenians when they start learning Greek, and the resemblance is emphasized when they begin living in a city (even though they do retain many bird-like features). Likewise, the Amazons begin to resemble Athenian women when they marry the Scythian men and learn their language (even though they mostly keep to their original way of life).

The fact that the Scythian men do not learn the language of the Amazons, but the Amazons appropriate that of the men, can be compared with Lysistrata’s and Praxagora’s appropriation of male speech. Penrose suggests that this points at the Amazons’ intelligence (which to the Greeks is a rather masculine trait), and Merrill asserts likewise, that the description of language acquisition here “wryly suggests that the Amazons are more skilled at cultural adaptation than the admittedly barbarous Scythians they have married.”<sup>781</sup>

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<sup>779</sup> Herodotus 4.113.

<sup>780</sup> Herodotus 4.114. See Brown and Tyrrell 1985: 299, who write: “Herodotus’ placement and use of ἐκτιλώσαντο specifically indicate that by the act of intercourse alone the Scythians accomplished the taming of the Amazons.”

<sup>781</sup> See Merrill 2008: 14 and Penrose 2016: 115. On a different note, this also links back to the point made in the sections on *The Time Machine* and *Birds*, namely that the possession of a common language and community-formation goes hand in hand (cf. pp. 135-6; 158-9).

The Scythians' reasoning for taming the Amazons recalls that of the Athenians when they wish to pursue the Greek model of marriage in order to fix the Amazons' chaotic way of life and establish a community – and not just the model of any Greek, but that of Kekrops, the Athenians' first king and ancestral parent to whom they attribute the establishment of marriage.<sup>782</sup> This reasoning is first implied in Herodotus 4.114 when the Scythians say to the Amazons: “Let's stop living like this from now on...” (νῦν ὧν μηκέτι πλεῦνα χρόνον ζόην τούηνδε ἔχωμεν), and is later reinforced by the Amazons' proposal to move to the other side of the Tanais River to form a society. Like the Athenians, the Scythians seem to believe that men and women must join in union together if they want to live in a proper community that is not marked by uncivilized and warring conditions.<sup>783</sup> Moreover, they seem to believe that the Amazons alone may represent chaos, but when united with men, they have the potential to form a social order, in this case that of the Sauromatians.<sup>784</sup>

The formation of a community in Herodotus' account of the Amazons does not only recall the Kekropian model of marriage as a civilizing force but also the Homeric household, which “was founded on legitimate marriage, and [which] perpetuated itself by fashioning legitimate marriages.”<sup>785</sup> More specifically, “no household could exist without a lawful wife, that is, a wife obtained according to the recognised rules of matrimony.”<sup>786</sup> The same is true for a plot of land, something that is associated with the idea of a household in Homer. For

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<sup>782</sup> Tyrrell 1984: 28. Cf. Loraux 1986: 25. “King of Athens before Athens comes into existence, Kekrops accomplishes the transition from savagery to civilization by collecting men together into a city...and by introducing marriage, which puts an end to promiscuity.”

<sup>783</sup> Cf. Hartog 1988: 259. “We find the Scythians reasoning like Greeks (one does not make war against women) and it seems that for them, too, the polarity between war and marriage is meaningful.”

<sup>784</sup> Cf. Blok 1995: 92. “In the Herodotean story, the Skythians and Amazons were merged to become the Sauromatians...” Cf. Dewald 1981: 100. “Together the Amazon women and Scythian men remove to a nearby uninhabited area to found a new people that will exhibit a blend of Scythian and Amazonian qualities.”

<sup>785</sup> Leduc 1992: 242.

<sup>786</sup> Leduc 1992: 242.

example, in *Od.* XIV, 61-3, Eumaeus says to the swineherd: ἦ γὰρ τοῦ γε θεοὶ κατὰ νόστον ἔδησαν, ὅς κεν ἔμ' ἐνδुकέως ἐφίλει καὶ κτήσιν ὄπασσεν, οἶκόν τε κληῖρόν τε πολυμνήστην τε γυναῖκα. “The gods, they must have blocked his journey home. He’d have treated me well, he would, with a house, a plot of land and a wife you’d gladly prize.”

The Amazons and the Scythians seem to associate similar things with the idea of a household, as marriage and the obtainment of a plot of land on the other side of the Tanais River define the foundational structure of their community. Again, both the Amazons and the Scythians reason like Athenians; and this time they do not just think like Kekrops but also like Homer when they associate wives and a plot of land with the idea of a household, and thus also with the idea of a well-ordered community. Leduc writes: “In Homeric societies the entire residential group was founded on, and perpetuated itself by enforcing, legitimate marriage.”<sup>787</sup> More importantly, as Lévi-Strauss puts it, marriage in Homeric societies made “an effort to transcend theoretically irreconcilable principles.”<sup>788</sup> Presumably, the older Scythians have something similar in mind when they send the young men to tame the Amazons by the means of marriage: overcome differences and pave the way towards a more peaceful future.

This kind of reasoning brings to mind the ending of *Lysistrata* and the myth of the Lemnian women, as told by Apollonius of Rhodes. For at the end of *Lysistrata*, men and women reconcile and are moved back into harmony and marriage, which confirms the happy and triumphant ending of the comedy. The myth of the Lemnian women provides a similar ending: briefly, the Lemnian women develop an unattractive body odour because of Aphrodite’s anger towards them. The women’s husbands, repulsed by their wives’ smell, decide to take Thracian captives as concubines, which leads the women to kill all the men on

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<sup>787</sup> Leduc 1992: 243.

<sup>788</sup> Lévi-Strauss 1983: 53.

Lemnos. Hypsipyle, however, does not want to take part but helps her father to escape instead. Shortly after, she greets Jason and the Argonauts, and leads the Lemnian women into a mass marriage with them, marking the reunion of men and women and the commencement of a more peaceful future that is not shaped by warfare.<sup>789</sup>

In all three stories, the polarity between warfare and monogamous marriage is present as well as the (Greek) idea that men and women must (re-) unite in order to live less chaotic, and more peaceful, lives.<sup>790</sup> The reasoning that *Lysistrata*, Hypsipyle, and the Scythian men seem to share brings to mind a few philosophical dialogues, some of which have already been discussed earlier. For example, it recalls the weaving-analogy in Plato's *Statesman* where the Stranger argues that the universal science of statesmanship knows how to weave everything that is in a state into an organized fabric. As stated on p. 92, the statesman accomplishes this by providing both a divine and a human bond for the citizens' souls. The divine bond is created by implementing in men's soul a correct opinion of what is just and good, and the human bond is formed by the monogamous marriage of men and women whose offspring will have a balanced mixture of the two opposing elements.<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>789</sup> Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.9.17. Again, a ring-like sequence is present.

It is worth noting that Herodotus tells the story the other way around and narrates an account of Lemnian men murdering women and children. In his version, told at 6.138, Lemnian men abduct Athenian women to be their concubines and have children with them. The women raise the children in the Athenian way, and teach them the Attic dialect and Athenian customs. The Lemnian men, fearing that these Athenian children will one day dominate over the Lemnian children, decide to kill them and their mothers, too. Herodotus also briefly mentions the story of the Lemnian women killing their husbands at the end of 6.138, which, along with the other one, "is one of the origins of the universal Greek practice of describing savage deeds as 'Lemnian'", according to him.

<sup>790</sup> In the case of *Lysistrata* and the Lemnian women, this also brings to mind the "binding nature of patriarchal marriage where wife's subordination and patrilineal succession are reaffirmed." See Zeitlin 1996: 87.

<sup>791</sup> Cf. *Lys.* 568-570 and *Lysistrata*'s wool-allegory, which she uses in order to demonstrate that Athens must return to the status quo.

A similar stream of thought, albeit more negatively, appears in Aristotle, when he expresses concerns about Socrates' idea that wives should be held in common in Kallipolis, specifically about the premise from which the argument proceeds, namely, that it is best for the state to be as unified as possible. At 1261a17-23, he asserts:<sup>792</sup>

καίτοι φανερόν ἐστὶν ὡς προϊούσα καὶ γινομένη μία μᾶλλον οὐδὲ πόλις ἔσται: πλῆθος γάρ τι τὴν φύσιν ἐστὶν ἢ πόλις, γινομένη τε μία μᾶλλον οἰκία μὲν ἐκ πόλεως ἄνθρωπος δ' ἐξ οἰκίας ἔσται: μᾶλλον γὰρ μίαν τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς πόλεως φαίημεν ἄν, καὶ τὸν ἕνα τῆς οἰκίας: ὥστ' εἰ καὶ δυνατός τις εἴη τοῦτο δρᾶν, οὐ ποιητέον: ἀναιρήσει γὰρ τὴν πόλιν.

Is it not obvious that a state may at length attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state? – Since the nature of a state is to be a plurality, and in tending a greater unity, from being a state, it becomes a family, and from being a family, an individual; for the family may be said to be more one than the state, and the individual than the family. So that we ought not to attain this greatest unity even if we could, for it would be the destruction of the state.

Aristotle's concern about the maximum unification of the state and women being common property, which will ultimately lead to the destruction of the state, recalls Lysistrata's, Hypsipyle's, and the Scythians' rationale for their actions. Even though their stories are not about the unification of the state and the communality of women per se, they do feature an absence of partnership, a destructive environment and a lost, or lack of, Aristotelian community.<sup>793</sup> It also brings to mind the myth of Kekrops mentioned earlier in which Kekrops

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<sup>792</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* 1261a17-23. Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 462.

<sup>793</sup> While for Aristotle the absence of the institution of marriage affects the endurance of the state, for Plato the very presence of it (among the Guardian class) jeopardizes the survival of the state. For the Guardians, the private household and institution of marriage is to be abolished (457c-d) because Plato fears that private interests would clash with public interests, which would constitute a threat to the existence of the state. (That being said, there is still a form of temporary marriage, which is to be performed at certain festivals, in order to ensure a stable birth-rate, “so that the city will, as far as possible, become neither too big nor too small. καὶ μήτε μεγάλη ἡμῖν ἢ πόλις κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν μήτε μικρὰ γίγνηται, 460a. Low birth-rates could potentially become a problem in *Ecclesiastusae* since all men have to sleep with an old woman first before they are allowed to sleep with a young one, 1015-20. If more men sleep

introduces the Athenian men and women to marriage in order to end their random and promiscuous lifestyle.<sup>794</sup> In a similar vein to the myth of the Lemnian women, and Herodotus' account of the Amazons, "matriarchy [i.e. a chaotic era] comes to an end with Kekrops's institution of patriarchal marriage—namely, the yoking of one woman to one man."<sup>795</sup>

Indeed, the brief stint of gynaecocracy on Lemnos ends when the Lemnian women marry the Argonauts, and in Herodotus it ends when the Amazons cross the River Tanais and settle down with the Scythian men. For even though they keep to their original way of life (διαίτη ἀπὸ τούτου χρέωνται τῇ παλαιῇ τῶν Σαυροματέων αἱ γυναῖκες), they no longer live in a female-only society, but in a new community that is made up of both men and women and that has its own language and marriage customs.<sup>796</sup> Thus, even though it is a different kind of social order (men and women are equal, and the women go out hunting and wear the same clothes as the men), it is a social order that resembles the Athenian one because it is built on the institution of marriage and thus on one of Kekrops' ancestral norms. In a way then, even though the Amazon society contrasts the Athenian one in many ways, it does define the polis through the marriage with the Scythians.<sup>797</sup>

This is why I think it is a mistake to dismiss Herodotus' account of the Amazons as a "charming, happily-ever-after tale, [which] seems not only remote from [his] main theme...but a perfect example of his alleged gullibility and willingness to detour from the

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with old women than with young ones, this might affect the demographics of the state, which might then subsequently lead to its decline).

<sup>794</sup> Tyrrell 1984: 30.

<sup>795</sup> Tyrrell 1984: 31. Cf. Dewald 1981: 92: "...Herodotus' portrait of women emphasizes their full partnership with men in establishing and maintaining social order."

<sup>796</sup> Herodotus 4.116-7.

<sup>797</sup> This is in contrast with the unbalanced gender relations we see in Herodotus' description of the Persian society, or the rather odd ones in his account of the Egyptians. It is also rather different from his account of Periander and his relationship with the Corinthian women. In the story, Periander asks all the women in Corinth to strip naked, so he could burn their clothes and give them to the ghost of his wife in order to find out where she had put his friend's money.

main course of his narrative to tell *any* amusing story, no matter how irrelevant.”<sup>798</sup> On the contrary, I think Herodotus’ version of the myth *is* relevant because it can be used to point at something important about the Athenian status quo. For, like *Lysistrata* and the myth of the Lemnian women, it shows that being an Amazon, or living in a gynaeocratic society where the sexes are separated, can only ever be an interim status in the Greek world.<sup>799</sup> More specifically, it can be used “as a model that sets out Herodotus’ idea of how societies begin and are enabled to endure over time.”<sup>800</sup> For his account of the Amazons suggests that, in order for a society to endure, the *polis* and monogamous marriage must be (re-) created at some point, as is the case in *Lysistrata* and the myth of the Lemnian women (and in *Birds* as well). In this way, the Amazons, for all their social and behavioural differences, recall a Greek way of thinking.<sup>801</sup>

#### **VII.b. Herodotus’ Amazons and Apollonius’ Lemnian women in relation to *Ecclesiazusae***

This idea, that living in a gynaeocracy without the Kekropian institution of marriage is inevitably ephemeral, is significant for our understanding of the plot of *Ecclesiazusae*. For it draws attention to an important point about the (ostensibly) unavoidable outcome of Praxagora’s government, and it allows us to construct a view of what the play is doing with

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<sup>798</sup> Flory 1987: 109.

<sup>799</sup> Cf. Dowden 1997: 123 and 128. “The Amazon herself...has no future other than marriage or the tomb.”

<sup>800</sup> Dewald 1981: 100.

<sup>801</sup> This is also exemplified by the fact that the Scythian men obtain their share of their property from their parents before they marry the Amazons, which points at the relationship between property, monogamous marriage, and patriarchy (or, absence of matriarchy) in Greek society. At the same time, despite the underlying Greek notion, the fact that men obtain the dowries in the account, and not women, also indicates something rather non-Greek. As Asheri comments: “The circumstance that men, instead of women, bring dowries and leave their paternal home constitutes, in the eye of the Greeks, a subversion of ordinary rules.” See Asheri 2007: 660.

the idea that it is not possible to escape the Athenian status quo. For at the end of the day, as is the case in *Lysistrata*, the myth of the Lemnian women, and Herodotus' account of the Amazons, everything always seems to come back to it in one way or another. Certainly, the basic pattern of these stories is quite similar: at the lowest point of each story, (seemingly) unpleasant women are in power, and the men have either disappeared or sunk to the bottom of the hierarchy. In the end, the chaos that ensues, because of either the men's absence, the separation of the sexes, or the female rule, is fixed by marriage or the reunion of men and women—and this is the important point here, namely the return (or formation, in case of the Amazons) to the Athenian status quo on a social level.

However, in *Ecclesiazusae*, this does not exactly happen. The characters do return to the status quo on a political level in a way, simply by employing Praxagora as her leader, for she uses the same scoundrelly tricks others have used before her to gain power. However, they fail to do so on a social level because even at the end of the comedy, monogamous marriage is still obsolete and women are still communal; and, more importantly, women are still in power.<sup>802</sup> Even so, looking at the endings of the other stories discussed here we are in a position to suggest that a similar return to Athenian normality will eventually take place in *Ecclesiazusae* as well—even if it does not happen within the temporal frame of the comic production. This is why I disagree with Zeitlin, who argues: “[the play] takes the unusual step of leaving the women in power to enforce their utopian scheme, which by dissolving the

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<sup>802</sup> This is also why the Athenians would have probably preferred the society featured in Herodotus' version of the Amazon myth to the one depicted in *Ecclesiazusae*. For in the Amazon myth, even though the Scythian men are not at the top of the Sauromatian hierarchy but equal to the women, there is some sort of progress (and normality) in the Athenian sense because the myth ends with the portrayal of the settled community of Sauromatians. Additionally, the men have not really ceased being men, as is the case in *Ecclesiazusae*, and they do not do women's work, as is the case in Herodotus' account of the Egyptian society – the women may do men's work here but they have not swapped roles with them; they merely do the same kind of work. Herodotus' version of the myth thus features a kind of progress that *Ecclesiazusae* lacks.

institution of marriage and of the individual *oikos* itself, ensures the permanence of their rule in the new social order.”<sup>803</sup>

Instead, I believe that the discussion of the other female dominated societies puts forward the idea that Praxagora’s matriarchal rule is not permanent but rather short-lived because a society at that time, without the Athenian institution of marriage, can only exist for so long. Certainly, the ephemerality of Praxagora’s government is already implied in lines 657-8 of the play, where Blepyrus tells her that her regime, along with her political agenda, is bound to collapse. Blepyrus’ reasoning is based on the abolition of lawsuits rather than on that of patriarchal marriage, but it still underlines an important point, which Praxagora fails to see: her regime is not sustainable, and one day her downfall will come.

This, then, sheds new light on her decision to close the law-courts in order to put an end to the Athenians’ tendency to change their opinions constantly. Clearly, she is no different than they are, for her political agenda joins the seemingly unending string of swapping one malfunctioning political system for the other. Specifically, before Kekrops, the Athenians live in a state of promiscuity and randomness; “during his reign, Kekrops transforms the social organization of the people whom he has organized into a settled community, ‘inventing many laws for humans’...”<sup>804</sup> and now Praxagora alters the social organization of the Athenians once again by unsettling Kekrops’ community and by inventing many new laws.<sup>805</sup>

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<sup>803</sup> Zeitlin 1999a: 177.

<sup>804</sup> Zeitlin 1999a: 182. Zeitlin is referring to the scholiast to *Plutus* 773 here, who asserts that Kekrops “invented many institutions for the human race, raising them from a savage to a civilized condition...”

<sup>805</sup> These new laws make clear once again that Praxagora and Lysistrata are actually quite different in many ways. They both certainly serve as examples for women who are capable of achieving male standards of excellence, and both use a similar kind of rhetoric, but ultimately Praxagora is much more of a rebel than Lysistrata is. For not only does she alter existing law, but she overturns the laws of Kekropian Athens.

In this way, we can also see a circular movement from matriarchy to patriarchy and then back to matriarchy again, which is also pointed out by the neighbour in lines 830-1 when he says: τότε μὲν ἡμεῖς ἤρχομεν, νῦν δ' αἱ γυναῖκες. “We were in power then; now the women are.”<sup>806</sup> However, Herodotus’ account of the Amazon myth, and the myth of the Lemnian women, insinuates that the matriarchal order of the comedy will eventually be replaced by patriarchy again. When that happens, the neighbour might change his answer from τότε μὲν ἡμεῖς ἤρχομεν, νῦν δ' αἱ γυναῖκες to ἡμεῖς ἤρχομεν, τότε αἱ γυναῖκες ἤρχον, νῦν οἱ ἄνδρες ἄρχουσιν. Consequently, as innovative as Praxagora is on some levels, her political and social agenda is actually rather regressive because, when linking it to other stories that feature female dominated societies, it has the potential to show that the Athenians are going in circles and that, sooner or later, they will end up right where they started once again.<sup>807</sup>

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Although, looking at it another way, while Praxagora’s government is more premature and radical than others, it also shows a more successful state of society on many levels. Warfare, crime, and poverty do not exist, and everyone is taken care of. In a way, this brings to mind More’s ideology discussed in the introduction: while (new) societies may not be able to solve all problems (such as violence, which is clearly not on Praxagora’s agenda), they may at least be able to reduce the bad. Cf. pp. 35-6, with n. 115.

<sup>806</sup> The movement from patriarchy to matriarchy also brings to mind the oracle in *Lysistrata* 767-8, which predicts victory for the women if they work together. The oracle says: ἀλλ’ ὀπότεν πτήξωσι χελιδόνες εἰς ἓνα χῶρον, τοὺς ἔποπας φεύγουσαι, ἀπόσχονται τε φαλήτων, παῦλα κακῶν ἔσται, τὰ δ’ ὑπέρτερα νέρτερα θήσει Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης (...when the swallows hole up in a single home, fleeing the hoopoes and leaving the phallus alone, then are their problems solved, and high-thundering Zeus shall reverse what’s up and what’s down).

It also recalls the story of the oracle of the Argives in Herodotus 6.77, which predicts that the female will overcome the male: ἀλλ’ ὅταν ἡ θήλεια τὸν ἄρσενα νικήσασα ἐξελάσῃ καὶ κῦδος ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἄρηται, πολλὰς Ἀργείων ἀμφιδρυφέας τότε θήσει. ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει καὶ ἐπεσομένων ἀνθρώπων δεινὸς ὄφις τριέλικτος ἀπώλετο δουρὶ δαμασθεῖς. (“But when female conquers male and expels him, when glory in Argos redounds to her name, she will set Argive women a-plenty tearing their cheeks; and so it will be said by future generations that a fearful thrice-coiled snake fell before the spear and perished”). These examples primarily link to the topsy-turvy worlds found in Aristophanic comedy and Herodotean societies, but they can still be used to underline the idea of the change from patriarchy to matriarchy seen in the accounts analysed above.

<sup>807</sup> This brings to mind the question raised in the fragmentary play by Thugenides mentioned on p. 278 n. 762 (τί ὄγᾰθ’ ἀντιδικοῦμεν ἀλλήλοισι ἐτι;) and also line 208 of *Ecclesiazusae*

The persistence of the Greek status quo is thus visible in all the accounts of female dominated societies discussed here (even in the one that features barbarians), and it is this persistence that helps us reflect on fundamental values of Athenian civilization. For, like the stories of *Birds* and *Lysistrata*, these accounts demonstrate that ultimately Athenians cannot live without their patriarchal political and social standards, no matter how hard some of them may try to escape them. The men in *Ecclesiazusae* may have been stripped of their political power, but, taking into consideration the other accounts, it is fair to assume that they will rebel at some point and attempt to reinstate the previous status quo by re-institutionalizing the subordination of women through monogamous marriage, just as they did during the age of Kekrops.<sup>808</sup>

### **VIII. Modern Perspectives on the Amazon Myth and Women as Political Leaders**

At the end of this chapter, one question that is left to be asked is this: in what different directions do the conclusions of *Ecclesiazusae* and Herodotus' account of the Amazons take us? I mention some of the similarities in the previous sections, for example (1) both stories play into the historic conflict between matriarchal and patriarchal regimes, (2) both portray

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where Praxagora scolds the Athenians for tossing to and fro like a ship at sea when it comes to public opinions.

Furthermore, it recalls the various cycles analysed in the previous chapters, such as the ones seen in *PV*, *Birds*, the Platonic dialogues, and *The Time Machine*. These stories show that the past is contained in the future. *PV* makes clear that what Zeus does to Prometheus will be done to him as well; *Birds* is, to a certain extent anyway, about the reclaiming of a previously lost leadership; in the *Statesman*, history perpetually repeats itself by continually exchanging (a) for (b); in the *Timaeus*, Athens is subject to ever-recurring moments of foundation and cataclysm, and in *The Time Machine*, the time traveler is reminded of the Phoenicians and the Sphinx when he visits the Eloi in the year AD 802701. Cf. pp. 55-8; 83-5; 131-2; 141.

<sup>808</sup> If this assumption is true, then the ending of Praxagora's regime may also have the potential to serve as prime example, or warning even, for anyone who dares to challenge Athens' power and greatness, and perhaps even patriarchy in general.

women who are capable of achieving male standards of excellence, (3) both feature unbridled female sexuality and power relations to do with sex, (4) both present to the audience an interrogation and unmasking of female and male law, and legal practices, and (5) both examine the question, ‘what law, and what kind of political system, is best for Athens and the other societies described in the texts.’ More importantly, both the comedy and the myth portray women at moments of foundation and revolution and, comparably with the animal societies discussed in chapter 2, they show the power of collectivity.

But what are the different key elements of the texts? It is clear that both *Ecclesiazusae* and the Amazon myth feature a meeting, and confrontation between men and women—this can also be seen in *Lysistrata* and the myth of the Lemnian women. Eventually, the crises that are reached in those confrontations are resolved, but they are resolved rather differently in the comedy and the myth. In the comedy, the crisis is resolved by the abolition of monogamous marriage, which subsequently results in a form of separation of the sexes. In the myth, meanwhile, it is resolved the opposite way, namely by the creation of monogamous marriage and the union of men and women. Consequently, what Praxagora advertises as a problem in *Ecclesiazusae* is described as a solution in the Amazon myth. Put differently, while Herodotus presents elements of Athens’ view of what an ordered community should look like, Aristophanes presents a celebration of a regime that abolishes the very order Herodotus creates.

Furthermore, in Herodotus we witness the ascent from matriarchy to a more patriarchal society. This is despite the fact that the Amazons are still barbarian and rebellious in the sense that they wear men’s clothing and do men’s work; at the end of the day they are also more tame and settled than they are at the beginning of the story. Meanwhile, in *Ecclesiazusae*, we see the opposite happening, namely a comic portrayal of Athens’ descent

from patriarchy to matriarchy (even though the unavoidable return of patriarchy seems to be looming over the characters' heads).<sup>809</sup> Unlike the Amazons, the women in the comedy continue to be rebellious even at the very end of the play, as they celebrate the gynaecocratic regime and the end of patriarchal Athens. Consequently, despite their many similarities, ultimately the texts take us in two different directions, as they end with different political and social notions.

However, despite their differences, the interpretations of these different political and social notions have the potential to link together, as they are assimilated to a debate not only about democracy, different social orders, and the refinement of law, but also about which social order is ultimately the better one. In this case, the initial answer to that question seems obvious. *Ecclesiazusae* ends in chaos and features a form of descent (in that the rule of men is replaced by the rule of women) and Herodotus' version of the Amazon myth ends in order and portrays a form of ascent (from the Athenian point of view, because men and women are united). Thus, at first glance, his appears to be the better (or, at least more successful) social order at that time. This idea that the more patriarchal society, the one in which men and women have formed a union, appears to be more successful than the other one is significant; and it recalls the argument made throughout this chapter and the previous ones, namely that it seems to be only a matter of time until the (patriarchal) status quo is (re-) established and celebrated once again.

Nonetheless, despite one social order arguably being better than the other one, there is something to be said about the notion of collectivity, which can be witnessed in both accounts. For it not only recalls the different bird stories analysed in chapter 2 where the birds

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<sup>809</sup> This links to the notions of ascent and descent in the *Prometheia*, analysed in the first chapter (cf. pp. 55-8). Both there and here, it is clear that these notions oscillate, and that the theme of change within them dominates the stories. Lysistrata's and Praxagora's actions are situated within this theme of change, just like Zeus' and Prometheus'.

attempt to take their fate into their own hands and change it for the better (albeit unsuccessfully), but it also brings to mind the comparisons made between Aristophanes and Orwell or, more generally, the connection between fifth-century Greek comedy and early to mid-twentieth-century political literature. Specifically, it can be compared with utopian socialist literature written by women in the early twentieth-century in which female characters are often portrayed as a collective unit and the moving force in an attempt to fundamentally restructure the society of their time—much like the female characters in Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae* and *Lysistrata*.

It is, however, important to note that there are a number of significant differences between the modern gynaecocracies and the ancient ones, which need to be acknowledged before continuing. Specifically, the two most important differences for this discussion are the following: First of all, modern (utopian) gynaecocracies tend to be more evolutionary than ancient ones: rather than promoting radical revolutionary shifts (something that can be seen in both *Ecclesiazusae* and the myth of the Amazons), they avoid large revolutionary movements and instead build their societies piece by piece over the course of the centuries. This is so the foundations are set “deep to last all the longer” and the walls are raised “so high that they will not fear anyone.”<sup>810</sup> Secondly, as Johns writes, “the feminist utopian view of history...is not the traditional fantasy of suddenly summoning Eden [something which is characteristic for Aristophanic comedy]. Instead, it is a theory of history as accumulation, the combined power of many small, discrete events issuing in large impacts.”<sup>811</sup> Or, as Bammer puts it when describing American feminist utopias from the mid-twentieth century, “...a movement toward

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<sup>810</sup> Johns 2010: 186. Pizan 1404-5: 12.

<sup>811</sup> Johns 2010: 188.

utopia [is] a journey of many small steps [and] change...is the sum total of changes we ourselves create day by day in the process of living.”<sup>812</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these fundamental differences there is a connection to be made between the ancient and modern gynaecocracies—just like there is a connection to be made between Aristophanes and Orwell. In particular, while *Birds* and *Animal Farm* portray, amongst others, a confrontation between culture and nature, and civilization and barbarity, the ancient gynaecocracies analysed here and their modern counterparts depict a confrontation between men and women and, at times, a lack of understanding between the political thoughts of the former and the political proposals of the latter. More specifically, many of the texts written by women in the early and mid-twentieth century portray scenarios that are especially comparable with the beginning of *Lysistrata*, and the myths of the Amazons and the Lemnian women: matriarchy is the (initial) leading force and men are either absent or not in the forefront of the stories.

Furthermore, in both the ancient and the modern gynaecocracies, the women, or female characters, have broken free from the place traditionally assigned to them by the society of their time; and they propose a series of modifications within their respective societies. These modifications often relate to the core of the women’s societies and may make the reader question established social, political, and legal norms—as is the case in *Birds* and *Animal Farm*. More importantly, while in ancient Athens, it is the stage of the theatre that

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<sup>812</sup> Bammer 1991: 104. Another difference which needs to be mentioned is the fact that the stories about the ancient gynaecocracies (especially those seen in Aristophanes) are written and played by men for a (presumably) male-dominated audience. The modern gynaecocracies, on the other hand, are written by women for a readership composed (largely) of other women. However, I do not think that this difference undermines the analysis presented here, just like the presentation of comic and tragic women in Greek plays is not undermined by the fact that their roles are acted by men. I believe it is possible to compare these texts, regardless of the differences in the authors’ sex, as their presentation (and challenge) of the audiences’ expectations of social norms is certainly comparable, as are the juxtapositions of the polarities between male and female. Cf. Mossman 2001: 375.

offers female characters a space to freely express their social and political views without the constraints that are placed on women off stage, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century that space is provided in (and by) utopian fiction, which serves as a vehicle for women's critique of political and social matters.<sup>813</sup> Moreover, it is "one of the few modes available for feminist theorizing and the articulation of alternatives" and it allows women "to express their desires for a more just and equitable society ..."<sup>814</sup>

Additionally, in both the ancient and modern accounts, marriage is often either abolished or temporarily interrupted, which has to do with the fact that it may prevent the women featured in those stories from achieving both agency and self-determination. As Russ writes in the 1975 novel *The Female Man* in the voice of one of her characters: "Men succeed. Women get married. Men fail. Women get married...Men start wars. Women get married. Men stop them. Women get married."<sup>815</sup> This is why, in order to achieve the much sought-after agency and self-determination, women must either become men (if only temporarily, as seen in *Ecclesiastusae*) or, alternatively, they must remove themselves to a remote place, which is separate from their own society and which does not include men.

One of the books that features such a separate society, is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* of which I offer a comparative analysis below in order to transport themes from Aristophanes and Herodotus to modern literature to show how the anxieties and frustrations presented in the ancient texts are able to transcend their historical contexts, and are still of significance in Gilman's time.

The book is published in 1915 and tells the story of three male explorers who discover an ancient all-female community in a remote Amazonian jungle. The majority of the book

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<sup>813</sup> Johns 2010: 175.

<sup>814</sup> Johns 2010: 175.

<sup>815</sup> Russ 1975: 203-4.

focuses on the differences between the society of the men and that of the women; and it examines the social and political issues of Gilman's time by juxtaposing the patriarchal society of the men and the two-thousand-year-old matriarchy of the women. While often met with a lack of understanding on both sides, most of the characters are also willing to learn from one another and look at their respective societies through the lens of the other. It is, however, the ending of the story that is particularly noteworthy because, comparably with Herodotus' version of the Amazon myth, Gilman's account ends with the marriages between the male explorers and the Amazonian women, and the (re-) marriage between matriarchy and patriarchy.<sup>816</sup>

At first, it seems that the society described in *Herland* can be readily compared with *Ecclesiastusae* because it features many characteristics which Praxagora proposed for her gynaeocracy two thousand years earlier: warfare, crime, and jealousy do not exist, and the nation functions as one big household where everyone is cared for. However, these are the only (main) similarities of the two gynaeocratic societies, which are potentially even outweighed by one big difference, namely by the fact that the women of *Herland* are portrayed as being rather sexless, as the focus is more on motherhood rather than on sexual relations even after they marry the men. Still, looking closer it becomes clear that Gilman's modern Amazons can be compared with Herodotus' ancient Amazons and, through a comparative reading and transporting of ancient themes to her writing, I show that they offer additional insight into the texts' implications for both ancient and modern audiences.

While in ancient Greece the Amazon myth is often associated with the past, specifically with the arguably rather chaotic principle of matriarchy discussed earlier, it is also

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<sup>816</sup> Suksang 1995: 147.

possible to associate it with the present when looking at it through the lens of the ‘Other’ in the early twentieth-century. Blok argues similarly:<sup>817</sup>

Certainly, the Greeks associated the Amazons with the past, but this remained vague in many ways. Not only was there no coherent perception of the past in which the Amazons were incorporated in a variety of ways—the historical view of the mythical past was too speculative for that—but in other respects too, the Amazons were not figures who were confined to the heroic past, for time and again these women turned out to intervene in the present as well.

Blok’s argument here is primarily based on the assertion that in Greek etymology, the word ‘Amazones’ is “approached as a piece of contemporary Greek and not as a residue from earlier times,”<sup>818</sup> but her argument can nonetheless be placed into the twentieth-century as well. Indeed, much like *Birds* and *Animal Farm*, the Amazon myth has the potential to become assimilated to our time and it can be used to point at contemporary social, political, and legal problems. Moreover, comparing it with its modern adaptation in *Herland*, we can continue to examine a) ephemeral female leadership and the temporary absence of men, and b) the eventual (re-) union of men and women on a political and social level and the formation of, or return to, a more patriarchal community.

This becomes especially clear when looking at the initial absence of men and the two-thousand-year old all-female leadership in *Herland*. Comparably with elements of the myth of the Lemnian women, there used to be a patriarchy, but most of the men are killed in a succession of wars. The slaves of the men, seeing an opportunity to gain control, kill the remaining men and boys as well as the older women and mothers. This leads the younger women to rise in revolt and kill all the slaves, leaving no male behind. This all happens in a mountain pathway whose only pass to the outside world had previously been sealed off by a

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<sup>817</sup> Blok 1995: 33-34.

<sup>818</sup> Blok 1995: 34.

volcanic outburst. Consequently, there is no way out and no way in, and the younger women are the only ones who are left, thus marking the beginning of a matriarchy.<sup>819</sup> In regards to the foundation of this matriarchy, Johnson-Bogart asserts:<sup>820</sup>

As in other literary utopias, the strategy for achieving perfection in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* appears to be based primarily on eliminating one partner in various pairs of terms where the excluded partner is seen to be the locus of the ills of society.

Johnson-Bogart continues by arguing that there are deep assumptions about the nature of the meaning of certain terms in virtually all literary utopias. These assumptions, she states, are “based on the binary structure of language which produces an abundant network of paired terms whose meanings are one another’s opposites - masculine/feminine, public/private...and so on.”<sup>821</sup> It is clear that in the ancient gynaecocracies analysed in this chapter, it is primarily the ‘masculine vs feminine’ and the ‘public vs private’ (or, the *polis* and the *oikos*), which are in opposition to one another (something which can also be seen in the Pythagorean Table of Opposites, as stated on p. 256 n. 709). As Johnson-Bogart argues, the same argument can be made for many modern gynaecocracies, and utopian fiction in general.

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<sup>819</sup> In regards to the survival of the race: at the very beginning of the history of *Herland*, the founding mothers perfect the asexual reproduction technique of parthenogenesis, thus ensuring, and explaining, the continuous birth of baby girls for generations to come without the intervention from men.

A comic reversal of this scenario is found in Lucian's moon episode in *VH* 1.22, where “there are no women – they don't even have a word for ‘woman’ – but men reproduce together through an agreed alternation of gender-roles, and in the absence of a uterus gestation takes place in the calf of the father's leg, whence the Moon-baby is delivered in due course by surgery – another nod, perhaps, towards the asexual reproduction suggested by Herodorus' egg-laying Moon-women.” Ní Mheallaigh 2014: 220.

<sup>820</sup> Johnson-Bogart 1992: 85. For instance, as Johnson-Bogart writes, “in *Looking Backward*, Edward Bellamy eliminates ‘poor’ from the dichotomy rich vs poor...[and] in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan attempts to eliminate what he perceives to be superstition and irrationality...to make his notion of reason ubiquitous.”

<sup>821</sup> Johnson-Bogart 1992: 85.

However, it is also clear that while the meanings of these paired terms are usually in opposition to one another in theory, in practice this is not always the case. As argued earlier, when looking at *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, the categories of the ‘masculine vs feminine’ appear to be particularly blurred because *Lysistrata* and *Praxagora* employ a combination of male and female rhetoric (cf. pp. 224-5 and 240-1). In this vein, the traditional opposition of the paired terms is deconstructed over the course of the comedies—something that can also be observed in the myth of the Amazons and the myth of the Lemnian women. In *Herland*, these terms, and the assumptions about the nature of the meaning of them, are deconstructed in a way that is comparable with that seen in the ancient gynaeocracies. More importantly, however, is the fact that at the end of the narrative, they are put back together, which is also the case in the myths of the Amazons and the Lemnian women, and *Lysistrata*. In particular, it is “the basis of meaning in the relation that binds terms to one another,” which is reconstructed [at the end of *Herland*].<sup>822</sup>

In both the ancient and modern accounts, both terms, whether separated or paired, are of importance because it is they that help define the world that is created. As Johnston states, “...for Gilman, the patriarchal world makes the fiction of *Herland*’s matriarchy necessary since each requires the concept of that other to define itself.”<sup>823</sup> Put differently, in both cases, the old world that is abolished at the beginning of the story is still relevant throughout the entire narrative, because the new world could not be defined without it. In *Herland*, this is only accentuated by the fact that the world is unfolded through the eyes and consciousness of the three male explorers who grow increasingly wary of the flawed patriarchal society they come from; and this clearly echoes Hythloday’s sentiments when he tells his friends about Utopia which is, according to him, so much better than the society they live in. However, in

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<sup>822</sup> Johnson-Bogart 1992: 86.

<sup>823</sup> Johnston 1991: 59.

*Herland*, it is also emphasized by the fact that the women believe their society can only benefit from this male perspective from the outside. More importantly, they learn that their society is not fully complete when the 'masculine' half does not contribute to it.

This brings to mind both the approaches seen in *Ecclesiazusae* and *Utopia*, where the foundations of the new rules are defined by the flaws of the old (something that is characteristic for Aristophanic comedy in general), and the one seen in *Lysistrata* where Athens is, in a way, incomplete during the time the women occupy the Acropolis. In this manner, Gilman's text is as much about women as *Ecclesiazusae* is about female leadership and *Lysistrata* about a sex-strike. For while it certainly outlines a form of an all-female utopia, it also points out the flaws of the male-dominated world, which it has left behind, by juxtaposing the matriarchal world of the women, and the patriarchal world of the men. More importantly, as is the case in *Lysistrata*, *Herland* ends with the re-marriage of men and women when the three male explorers marry three of the women in Herland, thus accentuating the notion of (the now former) incompleteness and the separation of the sexes.

One of the marriages in *Herland* is particularly noteworthy. In the sequel to *Herland*, called *With Her in Ourland* and published in 1916, one of the women, Ellador, decides to leave Herland and move to the United States with her new husband Vandyck. However, complications ensue and the couple agrees to return to Herland to settle there for good. By now, however, Ellador is pregnant, thus disrupting the 2000-year long stint of parthenogenesis immediately upon arrival, and, as it turns out, also the entire matriarchy itself. For the last words of the book read: "and in due time a son was born to us."<sup>824</sup> As Mary Beard said in a recent lecture on *Women in Power*, "...Gilman must...have been very well aware that there was no need for another sequel. Any reader in tune with the logic of the

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<sup>824</sup> Gilman 1916: 149.

Western tradition will have been able to predict exactly who would be in charge of Herland in fifty years time: it would be that boy.”<sup>825</sup> Even though this is not mentioned in the story, the insinuations are clear enough: the return to patriarchy is inevitable even in the matriarchy of Herland, and there is no doubt that soon, parthenogenesis will not be needed anymore either.

Both the sequel, as well as the point made earlier, that *Herland* juxtaposes the world of the women with that of the men by unfolding it through the eyes of the ‘other,’ link to the logical structure behind the general idea of matriarchy. This becomes especially clear when looking at Pembroke’s and Vidal-Naquet’s definition of matriarchy. Vidal-Naquet, drawing from Pembroke, asserts, “whether we are talking about the Amazons or the Lycians, it is the Greek polis, that men’s club, that is being defined by historians and its ‘ethnographers’ in terms of its opposite.”<sup>826</sup> Additionally, the ending of *With Her in Ourland* brings to mind Herodotus’ account of the Amazons, which, as written earlier, can serve as a model that sets out his idea of how (patriarchal) societies begin and are enabled to endure throughout time. More importantly, however, Pembroke and Vidal-Naquet, as well as Herodotus’ model, recall the argument made earlier about *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae* (and *Utopia*, for that matter). Namely, that the dismantling of the comic societies, while entertaining, is also unsettling because it clearly points at the social and political shortcomings of real societies.

It appears that Gilman has something similar in mind when writing *Herland* – and, as discussed earlier on pp. 204-5, three decades later, this is also Orwell’s task in *Animal Farm* when he toys with reality only to put it back together at the end of the story in order to underline its weaknesses. I mention in the chapter on *Birds* that one of the connections between Aristophanes and Orwell is that both seem to believe that genuine progress “can only happen through increasing enlightenment, which means the continuous destruction of

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<sup>825</sup> Beard 2017. Cf. p. 46 n. 141.

<sup>826</sup> Vidal-Naquet 1986: 208. Pembroke 1965, 1967, and 1970.

myths.”<sup>827</sup> It appears that Gilman, along with other female utopian writers from the early to mid-twentieth-century, can join this connection, for she too is interested in sincere progress within society, which can only be achieved by increasingly educating people and by commenting on social and political matters, using literature as a vehicle.

This also links her to More’s humanist approach in *Utopia*, when he attempts to educate the public, both amusingly and disturbingly, by commenting on the injustices of his time. This, in turn, shows how not only *Birds*, but also *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae* can be readily compared with modern political and social discourse (i.e. *Herland*) when we pin them to *Utopia*. Precisely, I take the issues seen in the Aristophanic comedies (such as the separation of the sexes and unjust government styles) and, through a comparative reading, transport them into modernity via Gilman who uses the same mixture of realism and fantasy that More uses in *Utopia*. Like Aristophanes (who represents *Lysistrata* and *Praxagora* as being within both sexes) and More (who places the citizens of *Utopia* within paradoxical interpretations of tyranny), Gilman achieves this by showing an ‘Other’ who is “always and necessarily within, and [her project] points to her vision of a better world achieved through the integration...of polarities.”<sup>828</sup>

In this manner, it is not only the terms ‘masculine vs feminine’ which need to be reconstructed at the end of *Herland*, but also the union of men and women themselves, for only then can a more harmonious world be achieved. However, as is the case in *Lysistrata*, *Ecclesiazusae*, and *Utopia*, the ending of *With Her in Ourland* suggests that this union may not be as balanced as Gilman had hoped it would be. For it merely offers, in a style that reminds of that of Aristophanes and More, a return to the place it had initially tried to escape.

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<sup>827</sup> Kirschner 2004: 766. Cf. pp. 199-200.

<sup>828</sup> Johnson-Bogart 1992: 89.

Finally, it is clear that the plots of *Herland* and *With Her in Ourland* are also, like the stories discussed in the previous chapters, situated within an ever-recurrent theme of political change, and ascent and descent, which in turn is situated within a ring-composition. More importantly, like Wells' *The Time Machine* and Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Gilman's works are clearly comparable with ancient political theory and, like More's *Utopia*, they offer a modern symbolic interpretation of these themes and show that they are of significance even today. By doing so, they help us understand both patterns of legal reforms and political change as well as recurrent ideas in Western political thought in the last two thousand years.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this thesis, I do not wish to summarise everything that has been said; rather I would like to reiterate some of the fundamental points that have been made, and then discuss in more detail what they mean, not just for Aristophanes and his contemporaries, but also for us. Especially, the discourse presented in this thesis draws attention to the cyclical movements and oscillating notions of ascent and descent in law-making and political debate, both of which seem to inform western political thought in the last two thousand years. These movements demonstrate the conversation between ancient political theory and modern political thought when we situate them in a comparative analysis that begins with More's *Utopia*; and they show that the concerns of the ancient philosophers and playwrights in fifth-century Greece can also be found in our time when we place them in a trans-chronological dialogue across time and space.

Furthermore, it is clear that these movements and notions are largely characterized by rhetoric, and not just by its use and misuse, its merits and its faults, and its strengths and its limitations, but also by its portrayal of what it is like to have speech but to lack the capability, or inclination, to engage effectively in political debate. Specifically, the discussions about the different factions in the *Statesman*, the demanding task to teach political excellence so it can be a social achievement in the *Protagoras*, and the systematic use of rhetoric in *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, demonstrate the effective and ineffective ways in which political speech is used in different settings.

In the case of *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, this certainly also points at female and male gender conceptions, and how they can be disrupted and manifested at the same time. However, it also points at something else. Earlier this year, NYU hosted a re-staging of the 2016 presidential debates with reversed gender roles: Donald Trump was played by a woman,

and Hillary Clinton was played by a man. The initial assumption was this: Trump's aggression would be much less tolerated in a woman, and Clinton would appear as even more competent when acted by a man. However, the opposite was the case: many audience members struggled to find in the male Clinton what they had admired in Hillary, and found that the female Trump did quite well in moments where the real one had failed. For instance, as a few audience members said afterwards:<sup>829</sup>

The simplicity of Trump's message became easier for people to hear when it was coming from a woman. [...] Another...said that [the female] Trump created 'hummable lyrics,' while [the male] Clinton talked a lot, and everything she [said] was true and factual, but there was no 'hook' to it."

Like the reaction of the Proboulos who is unable to see Lysistrata's competence, and like the other characters' support of Praxagora's violent proposal, this reaction at NYU points at something of importance: not only does it show different male and female rhetorical styles, but also the presupposed standards by which we judge both of them. In this way, both the ancient and the modern examples can be used to think not only about the polarities between the masculine and the feminine, but also about their respective language and demeanour on the (political) stage, and the assumptions that come with them, even today. This in turn highlights the outcome of the task given at the beginning of this thesis, i.e. to understand patterns of jurisprudential reforms and dystopian political discourse between the ancient and modern world. For these examples make clear that Aristophanes' concerns (albeit presented in a satirical manner) about Athenians being unable to engage intelligently with oratory that is

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<sup>829</sup> Likewise, someone else said: "[The male Hillary Clinton] was 'really punchable' because of all the smiling. And a lot of people were just very surprised by the way it upended their expectations about what they thought they would feel or experience. There was someone who described... [the female Donald Trump] as his...aunt who would take care of him, even though he might not like his aunt." See Reynolds 2017 for the link to the debate and the quotations from the audience members.

beneficial, and dismiss the one that is ultimately damaging, causes just as much distress today as it did in late fifth- and early fourth century Athens.

Similarly, the aim to portray this concern in a way which a wide audience can understand, is still as challenging today, as it was during the time of Aristophanes and Plato. Three months after the performance at NYU, the New York City's Public Theatre put on a production of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for its annual Shakespeare in the Park programme. Staying in tune with many of Shakespeare's other works (and More's for that matter), it is a play which, amongst others, warns about the consequences of political violence, especially those who are about to commit it. The key element of the production was this: Julius Caesar was portrayed as Donald Trump. The intention, at least in part, was to warn the audience about his behaviour and agenda, much like Aristophanes warned about Cleon and Eupolis about Alcibiades. However, just like Aristophanes and Eupolis paid for this with lawsuits and, in Eupolis' case, perhaps even with death,<sup>830</sup> so the producers of *Julius Caesar* faced repercussions: they lost most of their sponsorships and were accused of 'sponsoring an assassination depiction of Donald Trump.'<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>830</sup> There are several (fragmented) sources, which accuse Eupolis of attacking Alcibiades and paying for it later. For instance, "Probus" *ad* Juvenal 2.91-92 states: quo titulo Eupolis comoediam scripsit, ob quam Alcibiades, quem praecipue perstinxerat, necuit ipsum perguit in mare praecipitando, dicens "ut tu me in theatri madefecisti, nunc ego te in mari madefaciam. "Eupolis wrote a comedy with this title, because of which Alcibiades, whom he had especially attacked, killed him by pitching him headfirst into the sea with these words: 'You have drenched me in the theatre, now I will drench you in the sea.'"

Likewise, Platonius *On the Distinctions among Comedians* (Koster I.19-21), notes: ἴσμεν γοῦν τὸν Εὐπόλιν ἐπὶ τῷ διδάξει τοῦς Βάπτας ἀποπνιγένητα εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν ὑπ' ἐκείνου εἰς ὃν καθῆκε τοῦς Βάπτας. ("We know at any rate that Eupolis after producing *Dyers* was drowned in the sea by the man against whom he had written *Dyers*). However, while "it is commonly assumed [that Eupolis]...died in the sea battle of Cynossema, fought in the later part of 411 (Thucydides 8.104-6)," Eratosthenes refutes this because he says there are plays which Eupolis produced after that time (*FGrHist* 241 F 19). Storey 2011: 26.

<sup>831</sup> See Wilkinson 2017.

Like many ancient audience members, several modern spectators missed the point of the production: it is not so much about finding entertainment in the depiction of politicians as tyrants (although Aristophanes may come close in some passages), but about the political warning which informs the performance. Especially, the cautionary advice to the masses who are easily swayed and manipulated by opportune rhetoric, and the words of warning about the consequences of ochlocracy (which also echoes Orwell's *Animal Farm*), are what characterizes the portrayal of many characters in these productions. Again, this modern example emphasises the distinct pattern of political change and dystopian discourse which the ancient and modern texts discussed in this thesis share, because it shows once again how the concerns of Aristophanes can also be found in modern paradigms, and what it is like to witness political warnings fall on deaf ears.<sup>832</sup>

There is one last question I would like to ask: what would Aristophanes make of all of this? Particularly, what would he say if he saw More's *Utopia*, or the reversed gender debate at NYU and the production of *Julius Caesar*? In regards to *Utopia*, he might find amusement in the idealised Spartan elements of which there are so many on the island, and there is little doubt that he would not want to examine the legal system which is so different from that of fifth-century Athens. He might look at some of its merits, such as the fact that the constant going back and forth at law has stopped once and for all; but he would, presumably, also recognise its faults. If there is no room for legal debate, then there is also no room for deliberative rhetoric, which could eventually lead to the state of weariness Peisetaerus and

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<sup>832</sup> The timeliness of this is further highlighted when looking at the production of *Lysistrata* at The Cambridge Greek Play in 2016. The Spartan ambassador was purposely depicted as Donald Trump (in both speech and demeanour); however, instead of dealing with large amounts of criticism, the actors received uncontainable laughter from the audience's side. The point here is not so much about the different receptions of the two plays (which is, in part, also due to the fact that they are different genres), but that both the comedy and the tragedy can be put on in fifth-century Greece and 16<sup>th</sup>-century England, and be just as fitting in 2017, because they address political issues which are still of relevance, even to us.

Euelpides suffer from when they decide to leave Athens to live with the birds. While the Utopian legal system does not require any progress according to the text, Aristophanes might find the state of weariness to which the lack of debate would lead (symbolically portrayed by Wells) troubling, as the absence of debate does not actually solve the problems that come with the presence of it.

Likewise, he might look at New York and find that not too much has changed. It is still common practice to impersonate politicians on the theatrical stage, and the task of unravelling different styles of speech and their meanings (both on and off stage) still proves difficult. In this vein, Plato's undertakings in the *Statesman* and the *Protagoras*, and his critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, are also still as pertinent today as they were in fourth-century Athens, since so many political discussions are still characterized by *πάλιν* rather than *προκοπή*. Equally, the dismissal of expertise and the acceptance of ineptitude, is still as much of a problem today as it was around 391/2 B.C. when Praxagora scolded the assembly for failing to listen to the truly wise and just decrees.

It is this pertinence which points at the importance of the research presented in this thesis. Precisely, I have drawn up a laboratory for political thought which showcases not only the history of jurisprudence and the interdisciplinary appeal of studying legal reforms and political theories across time and space, but also the value that lies in studying the *longue durée* of literature. It is the vitality of this *longue durée* of literary merit that makes clear how certain rhetorical patterns and political behaviours have the ability to transcend *any* particular historical context and do what Herodotus hoped to accomplish all those years ago. Namely, to preserve the remarkable achievements of human beings, their longings and their fears, their anxieties and serenities, their frustrations and satisfactions, and the traces of their events, no matter how far away they may seem. The dialogue between the ancient and modern world

shows how literature both preserves and exposes rhetorical and jurisprudential themes afresh for reinterpretation by every new participant throughout the centuries, from the audience member watching Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincit* in fifth-century Greece all the way to the guest at the *Julius Caesar* performance in the New York of our time.

Finally, as a last flourish, these juxtapositions may, at times, be disheartening, but they also serve as an important reminder that we should not stop confronting the limitations of rhetoric (as much as of a weary trope this meritorious appeal may have become in recent political debate), and the political and juridical problems which are often informed by them, as they still play a paramount role, both in antiquity and today: ἔτι γὰρ ὁ λόγος γοητεύει.

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