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THE PARABASIS IN ARISTOPHANES: PROLEGOMENA, *ACHARNIANS*

In this article, an introduction to a proposed more comprehensive treatment of the subject, I wish to discuss the contribution that the parabasis makes to the understanding and interpretation of Aristophanes' comedies. The study of this part of the plays has in the past concentrated upon two main areas: firstly, its role in the development of comedy, including questions about its original position in the dramatic structure and its relationship to other elements such as the parodos and agon; and secondly, its role as the repository of Aristophanes' personal views.[1] I shall touch but incidentally on the first of these, though my argument will have some bearing on it; to the second I shall return at the end. My aim is to consider an aspect of the parabasis that has not so much been neglected as dismissed as non-existent: the relation between the contents of the parabasis and those of the rest of the play. It is generally agreed that the parabasis deals with matters that are irrelevant to the dramatic action, but I wish to argue that it has a significant role as the focus of the most important themes in the play: far from breaking up the unity of the play, the parabasis provides indications as to where that unity is to be found, besides giving hints about the meaning of the play and the nature of Aristophanic comedy generally.[2]

When we have the parabases of but nine plays by a single author, written some sixty to ninety years after the traditional date for the granting of the first comic chorus by the archon,[3] plus fragmentary remains which may or may not come from parabases,[4] any reconstruction of the early history of the parabasis is necessarily highly problematic.[5] It has been suggested that the parabasis was the 'Kern und Urgebilde'

[1] On the parabasis in general, see most recently G. M. Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses* (London, 1971), with full bibliography. The principal studies are: T. Zieliński, *Die Gliederung der altattischen Komödie* (Leipzig, 1885); P. W. Harsh, 'The Position of the Parabasis in the Plays of Aristophanes', *TAPA* 65 (1934), 178–97; H. Herter, *Vom dionysischen Tanz zum komischen Spiel* (Iserlohn, 1947), pp. 31 ff. (particularly valuable reviews of earlier scholarship); T. Gelzer, *Der epirrhematische Agon bei Aristophanes* (Munich, 1960), pp. 203–12, 255–7; E. Fraenkel, 'Die Parabasenlieder', in *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes* (Rome, 1962), pp. 191–215 (repr. in H.-J. Newiger (ed.), *Aristophanes und die alte Komödie* (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 30–54); P. Händel, *Formen und Darstellungsweisen in der aristophanischen Komödie* (Heidelberg, 1963), pp. 84–111.

[2] The charge of irrelevance needs no exemplification, but has recently been restated by K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (London, 1972), p. 52, K. McLeish, *The Theatre of Aristophanes* (London, 1980), pp. 91 f., and with reference to *Acharnians* by K.-D. Koch, *Kritische Idee und komisches Thema*, ed. 2 (Bremen, 1968), p. 24. Only Harsh (n. 1), pp. 187 f. has considered the question of links, but in a very broad fashion; for *Knights*, cf. M. Landfester, *Die Ritter des Aristophanes* (Amsterdam, 1967), pp. 40–4; for *Lysistrata*, J. Vaio, 'The Manipulation of Theme and Action in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*', *GRBS* 14 (1973), 371 f.

[3] 486 B.C.; cf. D. W. Lucas on Arist. *Poet.* 1449^{b}. 1–2 (*Aristotle: Poetics*, Oxford 1968, p. 90).

[4] On fragments of other poets which may come from parabases, cf. M. Whittaker, 'The Comic Fragments in their Relation to the Structure of Old Attic Comedy', *CQ* 29 (1935), 188–91. C. Herington, in a review of Sifakis, cautions against too hasty an ascription of fragments to parabases, *Phoenix* 26 (1972), 292–4.

[5] Attempts to reconstruct backwards, as if a linguistic problem were involved, are especially dangerous. Compare, for instance, A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (ed. 2 by T. B. L. Webster, Oxford, 1962), p. 143: 'the fact that we can trace the steps by which Aristophanes attempted to work it better into the whole, suggests that if we were able to trace its development backwards, we should find that it was originally a non-dramatic performance'. Harsh (n. 1), p. 186 n. 18, argues in quite the opposite direction: 'the parabasis was originally relevant to the theme of the remainder of the play, but came in time to be used for any cause which the poet might choose'.

of comedy,[6] but there is no evidence to decide this either way. It does look to be old,[7] but it is uncertain whether the non-responsive part is as old as the epirrhematic.[8] The question of the original position of the parabasis seems now to have been settled in favour of the middle of the play, at a point where a natural pause is reached in the action.[9] Ever since Zieliński suggested the parabasis had originally ended the plays, with the chorus removing their disguises, this question has been much debated, with beginning, middle, and end all being supported as the original position.[10] The most recent discussion, by Sifakis, collects and adduces strong arguments for the middle. Not the least of his points is to show that the idea of 'breaking the dramatic illusion', on which those who wished to transpose the parabasis based many of their arguments, is really anachronistic for fifth-century Greece.[11] In support of Sifakis, one can add that those who saw the parabasis as an original epilogue were arguing from the premiss that the scenes which follow it are largely irrelevant and were added to Attic comedy under Doric influence.[12] As I shall try to show, these scenes are not irrelevant but are closely linked to the earlier ones: there is no need even to have recourse with Sifakis to Brecht's notion of 'epic' theatre, with its principle of 'jede Szene für sich'.

The parabasis, then, can be used to show that Aristophanes' plays have a much greater unity than is sometimes allowed, and I propose to discuss *Acharnians* to indicate some of the basic contributions a reading through the parabasis can make.

The parabasis of the *Acharnians* (626–718) falls naturally into two parts: (1) the anapaests[13] with the pnigos, in which Aristophanes defends himself against the charge

[6] W. Kranz, *Stasimon* (Berlin, 1933), p. 25. For other proponents of this theory cf. Herter (n. 1), p. 54 n. 152, to which add H. Genz, *de Parabasi*, (Diss. Berlin 1865), pp. 6 ff., and G. Kaibel, 'Zur attischen Komödie', *Hermes* 24 (1889), 38.

[7] T. Gelzer, 'Dionysisches und Phantastisches in der Komödie des Aristophanes', *Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft* 2 (1966), 55–70. On the historical relationship between epirrhematic agon, parodos and parabasis, see in general Pickard-Cambridge (n. 5), pp. 147–51, with Webster's criticisms, pp. 159–62. On the agon and parabasis, Herter (n. 1), pp. 31–3, 55 n. 165 (bibliography); Gelzer has recently suggested that the similarity in form is fortuitous, but Sifakis (n. 1), pp. 53–60 points out that the epirrhematic form is more appropriate to the agon and probably originated there.

[8] Sifakis, pp. 60–8.

[9] For this pause, cf. Händel (n. 1), pp. 86 f.

[10] The principal proponents of each view are conveniently listed by Gelzer (n. 1), p. 212 n. 1 (though note, with Harsh (n. 1), pp. 194 f., that Poppelreuter, *de comoediae atticae primordiis particulae duae* (Diss. Berlin 1893), pp. 32 ff., though credited with the parabasis-prologue idea, ultimately rejected the need to move the parabasis); cf. Sifakis (n. 1), pp. 15–21 for the principal theories, with references. A. Sodano, 'La parodos parabatica dei Pluti di Cratino. Metrica e struttura', *Rend. Acad. Arch. Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli* 36 (1961), 37–54, argues for the parabasis–parodos theory on the not very convincing grounds of the parabasis-like parodoi of Cratinus' *Pluti* and Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

[11] 'Breaking the dramatic illusion' is not, of course, the only argument for transposition: see Sifakis (n. 1), pp. 17 and 55–68. On 'breaking the illusion' cf. recently McLeish (n. 2), pp. 64–92; F. Muecke, 'Playing with the Play: theatrical self-consciousness in Aristophanes', *Antichthon* 11 (1977), 52–67; D. Bain, *Actors and Audience* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 3–12 and 208–22.

[12] So Zieliński, pp. 242 ff. On the possible Doric origin of the iambic scenes cf. Pickard-Cambridge (n. 5), pp. 162–210, with Webster's qualifications at pp. 173 f. and 177 f.; J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* (New Haven and London, 1975), pp. 223–8; and most importantly, L. Breitholz, *Die dorische Farce im griechischen Mutterland vor dem 5. Jahrhundert. Hypothese oder Realität?* (Stockholm, 1960).

[13] I shall refer to this section throughout as the 'anapaests'; it is also known as the 'parabasis proper' and *ἁπλοῦν*, but I shall reserve 'parabasis' for the whole, as some ancient critics did (cf. Gelzer (n. 1), p. 204 n. 3). All the extant plays have anapaests here except the *Clouds* with Eupolideans. On the metres of the parabasis, cf. Whittaker (n. 4) and Sifakis (n. 1), pp. 33–6, 45–51. On the ancient terminology, R. Cantarella, *Aristofane. Le commedie: I. Prolegomeni* (Milan, 1949), pp. 98–102.

of having slandered the Athenians, and (2) the epirrhematic syzygy, where the chorus, speaking now as old men, complain of their treatment in the law-courts at the hands of the young. At first sight, these two subjects may seem to have little to do with either each other or the dramatic action, but closer analysis of the details and especially of the underlying themes will show that the material of the parabasis in fact reflects the most important aspects of the play.

One may begin with what are the two basic functions of the parabasis. Firstly, it serves to identify the poet with his hero: what Aristophanes says of himself in the parabasis coincides with what happens to his hero in the play, and both are seen to be involved in the same sort of problems and engaged in the same sort of attempts to put them right. In *Acharnians*, after the chorus have been won over to the hero's view of things, they too can be included in this identification. These problems facing poet, hero and chorus are presented as causing distress not only to them in the play, but also to Athens generally and to Greece as a whole. The second function is then to gather together and emphasize the particular faults that have been exposed in the first half of the play, which will subsequently be shown to have been rectified as a result of Dicaeopolis' treaty. The parabasis thus acts as a focus or, as Mr Seager has suggested to me, a prism through which the play's chief themes are passed: it highlights the areas in which the hero (and so, by implication, the poet) brings benefits to the city.[14] The second part of the play is in many ways a mirror-image of the first: in the latter, the world is in chaos because of its faults, but later a kind of order is restored as the problems are solved.[15] At the same time, I should state at the outset that I do not wish to argue that the play is a sermon or a serious piece of social and political criticism. The union between poet and hero for the apparent benefit of the city is undermined by a variety of comic devices and by the fact that Dicaeopolis' world is not as paradisiacal as it may seem. There exists a tension between the implied 'message' that a peace treaty would be a good idea and the terms in which this is embodied.

1. *Poet, hero and chorus.* The identification of poet and hero is carried out mainly through the similarities between the anapaests of the parabasis and two scenes from the first half of the play: Dicaeopolis' speech in self-defence before the Acharnians (496–556) and the opening scenes in the Assembly.[16] Broadly, the first scene equates their experiences, and the second their attempts to put things right. The similarities are as follows.

[14] This identification of poet and hero is not uncommon in the early plays, so it is not true to say, with de Ste Croix, that Dicaeopolis is the character who 'alone of Aristophanes' characters of whom we know anything is *carefully and explicitly identified with the poet himself*' (G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London, 1972), p. 363). Nor, as will become clear, can I agree with him that this means that Dicaeopolis is speaking for Aristophanes.

[15] The pattern of the play is thus that common in ritual, where a period of chaos is followed by the imposition of order. This raises the question of comedy's relation to ritual, to which I shall return in a subsequent study of the *Knights*. I shall suggest that that play is based upon a common myth-type, a gigantomachy forming the climax of a succession myth. If this is accepted, then it allows one to offer explanations for the sudden changes at the end of the play, and to account for the base character of the sausage-seller, who is supposed to be the saviour of Athens.

[16] C. Bailey suggested (in 'Who Played "Dicaepolis"?' *Greek Poetry and Life* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 231–40) that Aristophanes himself took the leading role, which would give added point, but is unlikely: cf. C. F. Russo, *Aristofane autore di teatro* (Florence, 1962), pp. 59 ff.

This is the first time that either of them has spoken out explicitly.[17] Dicaeopolis has finally been driven to act by the behaviour of the Assembly:

37 νῦν οὖν ἀτεχνῶς ἥκω παρεσκευασμένος
βοᾶν, ὑποκρούειν, λοιδορεῖν τοὺς ῥήτορας.

Aristophanes has held his peace so far, but the attacks force him to reply:

628 ἐξ οὗ γε χοροῖσιν ἐφέστηκεν τρυγικοῖς ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν,
οὔπω παρέβη πρὸς τὸ θέατρον λέξων ὡς δεξιός ἐστιν·
διαβαλλόμενος δ'....

Similar attacks lead Dicaeopolis to make his defence, in which he claims that he is only telling the truth, however unpalatable it may be:

501 ἐγὼ δὲ λέξω δεινὰ μέν, δίκαια δέ.

Aristophanes says the same:

645 ὅστις παρεκινδύνευσ' ἐν Ἀθηναίοις εἰπεῖν τὰ δίκαια

cf. 655 κωμωιδήσει τὰ δίκαια. In each case, they refer to Cleon as a potential assailant:

502 οὐ γάρ με νῦν γε διαβαλεῖ Κλέων ὅτι
ξένων παρόντων τὴν πόλιν κακῶς λέγω

659 πρὸς ταῦτα Κλέων καὶ παλαμάσθω
καὶ πᾶν ἐπ' ἐμοὶ τεκταινέσθω.

Here of course the link between the real Aristophanes and his hero is especially close, since Dicaeopolis has earlier spoken of his prosecution by Cleon the year before for a comedy he had written, and this is exactly what had happened to Aristophanes (377 ff.).[18] A final similarity also contains a difference to which I shall return. In 502 f. (quoted above), Dicaeopolis showed himself aware of the effect his words might have on the allies; by contrast, Aristophanes claims that his words will have the good effect of making the allies keener to bring their tribute in order to see his plays:[19]

643 τοιγάρτοι νῦν ἐκ τῶν πόλεων τὸν φόρον ὑμῖν ἀπάγοντες
ἥξουσιν ἰδεῖν ἐπιθυμοῦντες τὸν ποιητὴν τὸν ἄριστον.

This paradoxical claim is repeated in the words of the Persian king to the Spartan ambassadors (646–51),[20] which brings us to the second important scene, that with the embassies.[21] Aristophanes summarizes his benefits to the city with regard to these in 633–40; they are briefly thus:

634 παύσας ὑμᾶς ξενικοῖσι λόγοις μὴ λίαν ἐξαπατᾶσθαι,
μήθ' ἥδεσθαι θωπευομένους, μήτ' εἶναι χαυνοπολίτας.

[17] This parallel, and Aristophanes' notoriously cavalier treatment of the truth about himself, should make one wary of drawing from such remarks conclusions about the parabases of *Banqueters* and *Babylonians*, as is done, for instance, by Harsh (n. 1), p. 191.

[18] For this trial cf. C. H. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge, Mass. 1964), p. 307 n. 2, and add V. Steffen, 'Qua lege fretus Cleon Aristophanem in iudicium deduxerit', *Eos* 48 (1956), 67–73.

[19] Apart from the comic exaggeration, there is also a nice ambiguity in 642. The sentence could mean, for Athenian ears, ὅτι δημοκρατοῦνται, καὶ ἄνευ τυραννίδος ἀλλήλοις πειθόμενοι (schol.'s second interpretation), or with an ironical reference to *Babylonians*, 'showing the people in the cities just what "democratic" rule means' (cf. schol. *Ach.* 378).

[20] For Spartan overtures to Persia, cf. Thuc. 2. 67, 4. 50. Any reminder to the Athenians of the judicial murder of the Spartan envoys in 430 here (Thuc. 2. 67. 4) would accord with the general emphasis on Athenian violence in the play (see below). See also D. M. Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leyden, 1977).

[21] On the complex question of Athenian–Persian relations at this time, cf. the survey in R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 487–95; Lewis (n. 20), Index *s.v.* 'Athens'.

Compare the closing lines:

657 οὐ θωπεύων οὐδ' ὑποτείνων μισθοὺς οὐδ' ἐξαπατύλλων,
οὐδὲ πανουργῶν οὐδὲ κατάρδων, ἀλλὰ τὰ βέλτιστα διδάσκων.

There are four faults here from which he is trying to protect the Athenians: their susceptibility to *ξενικοὶ λόγοι*,[22] to flattery, to being *χαυνοπολῖται*, and to over-reliance on *μισθοί*. Each of these has been clearly exemplified in the Assembly's dealings with the ambassadors, and it is here that the parallelism between the two men is especially close. Like Aristophanes, Dicaeopolis warnèd the Athenians against the deceptions of the 'Persian'-speaking Pseudartabas[23] and his fellow ambassadors:

114 ἄλλως ἄρ' ἐξαπατώμεθ' ὑπὸ τῶν πρέσβεων;

but the foreign language did fool them. Secondly, Dicaepolis expresses scorn at Theorus' tale of Sitalces' writing *'Αθηναῖοι καλοί* (144) on his walls,[24] and Aristophanes warns them against those who call them *ἰοστεφάνους, λιπαράς* (637–9). Thirdly, reference to the *χαυνοπολῖται* Athenians (not uncommon in Aristophanes)[25] is found in Pseudartabas' *χαυνόπρωκτ' 'Ιαοναῦ* (104, cf. 106) and in Dicaeopolis' dismissive

133 ὑμεῖς δὲ πρεσβεύεσθε καὶ κεχήνετε.

Finally, Aristophanes' refusal to offer *μισθοί* recalls the false promises of gold from the Persian king (102 ff.) and the *μισθοί* whose misuse Dicaeopolis so frequently bemoans (66 f., 137, 159–61, 170).

Aristophanes' play and Dicaeopolis' treaty, therefore, are both responses to the same set of problems prevalent in Athens. This identification of the two has the seal set on it by the pnigos, which concludes Aristophanes' remarks on his own behalf. From the Suda,[26] we know that this passage imitated a Euripidean tragedy, which is generally taken to have been the *Telephus*.[27] It is, after all, this play which provides much of the action from the end of the parados to the speech of Dicaeopolis. A fragment of this play also seems to lie behind his offer to make his case with his head on the chopping-board as an earnest of the truth of what he has to say (fr. 706N²):[28]

'Αγάμεμνον, οὐδ' εἰ πέλεκυν ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων
μέλλοι τις εἰς τράχηλον ἐμβαλεῖν ἐμόν,
σιγήσομαι δίκαια γ' ἀντειπεῖν ἔχων.

[22] *ξενικοῖσι λόγοις* has two meanings, both of which are significant: (1) it suggests the rhetorical fireworks of people like Gorgias (*LSJ*⁹ *s.v. ξενικός* II); (2) with the schol. *ξενικοῖς τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ξένων πρέσβεων λεγομένοις*. H. Weber, *Aristophanes-Studien* (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 73 ff., sees references to *Banqueters* and *Babylonians* here, which is also appropriate.

[23] On Pseudartabas' language, see the contrasting views of K. J. Dover, 'Notes on Aristophanes' *Acharnians*', *Maia* 15 (1963), 7 f., and M. L. West, 'Two Passages of Aristophanes', *CR* n.s. 18 (1968), 5–8.

[24] Cf. Thuc. 2. 29, 67.

[25] Cf. Weber (n. 22), pp. 90–5; van Leeuwen on *Kn.* 753–5; Henderson (n. 12), pp. 209–11.

[26] *S.vv. παλαμᾶσθαι, ἁλωτόν*. For the ancient testimony, cf. Blaydes ad loc.

[27] On *Telephus*, cf. E. W. Handley and J. Rea, *The Telephus of Euripides*, *BICS* Suppl. 5 (1957), esp. pp. 22–5, 33–5 on Aristophanes. P. Rau, *Paratragodia* (Munich, 1967), pp. 19–42, puts less trust in the evidence from Aristophanes. It is not certain (*a*) that the seizure of the child took place on stage in Euripides (cf. Handley–Rea, pp. 36 f.) and (*b*) how closely Dicaeopolis' speech is modelled on the original (Rau, pp. 27 f.).

[28] Cf. 318, 355, 359, 366, 486 f., with Rau (n. 27), p. 27. For *ἐπίξηνον* = 'chopping-board', cf. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon*, iii (Oxford, 1950), p. 529. Handley-Rea (pp. 35, 46) follow Bergk in ascribing the lines to the *Telephus*, and suggest they were spoken by Menelaus after Telephus' self-defence.

If the pnigos has imitated the *Telephus*, it would provide a fitting climax to Aristophanes' remarks, with words from a tragedy in the guise of whose hero his own main character has tried to show the Athenians the error of their ways. Telephus is an ideal symbol for men who are threatened despite their potential benefit to their oppressors: Telephus was able to lead the Greeks to Troy, but they nearly put him to death. This, by hyperbole, can be applied to Dicaeopolis and Aristophanes.

Having discussed the link between poet and hero, I pass now to the chorus as they are once their eyes have been opened by Dicaeopolis. From being his violent opponents, they have become simple old men, and the figure of Telephus serves well to characterize them too as they present themselves in the syzygy.[29] There, they demonstrate that they too have been ill rewarded for their services at sea and Marathon:

676 οἱ γέροντες οἱ παλαιοὶ μεμφόμεσθα τῇι πόλει·
οὐ γὰρ ἀξίως ἐκείνων ὧν ἐναυμαχήσαμεν
γηροβοσκούμεσθ' ὑφ' ὑμῶν, ἀλλὰ δεινὰ πάσχομεν

(cf. 699). All they get is prosecution and bamboozlement in court at the hands of the young. As a prime example, they adduce Thucydides, son of Melesias, a man once great, but now unable to defend himself.[30] Furthermore, they resemble Dicaeopolis speaking at the block in:[31]

683 τονθορύζοντες δὲ γήραι τῶι λίθωι προσέσταμεν.

Their complaints about the rhetorical tricks of their accusers (686–8) also recall the rhetorical acrobatics directed by Cleon against Dicaeopolis/Aristophanes in 377–82. Thus, despite apparently belonging to the dominant ideological group in the play's first half, the chorus are finally revealed to be as much at the mercy of the corrupt powers that be as the poet and hero; one may compare the jurors in *Wasps*.

2. *The parabasis as focus of problems.* It is in the chorus's description of the young accusers that Aristophanes makes reference to what is in fact the mainspring of much of the trouble in the play:

685 ὁ δὲ νεανίας ἑαυτῶι σπουδάσας ξυνηγορεῖν
εἰς τάχος παίει ξυνάπτων στρογγύλοις τοῖς ῥήμασιν.

The idea of hasty and violent action is fundamental to most of the responses in the play to things that someone does not approve of. This note of highly emotional reaction is struck in the prologue, where Dicaeopolis sets the trend with a number of particularly forceful descriptions of how he feels.[32] In the very first line of the play,

1 ὅσα δὴ δέδηγμαι τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ καρδίαν

[29] For such a change in the attitude of the chorus after the agon, compare the parabases of *Wasps* and *Birds*.

[30] Cf. H. T. Wade-Gery, 'Thucydides the Son of Melesias', *JHS* 52 (1932), 205–27 (repr. in *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 239–70); A. Andrewes, 'The Opposition to Pericles', *JHS* 98 (1978), 1–8. His aphasia, for which his trial was famous (*Wasps*, 946 ff.), makes him a particularly appropriate symbol for the chorus (cf. 683, quoted in text).

[31] τῶι λίθωι might refer back ironically to the stones used so much by the Acharnians in their earlier guise (184, 236, 285, 295, 319, 341, 343).

[32] Aristophanes' prologues merit attention generally in this respect. There is a further good example in *Thesmophoriazusae*, where the apparent nonsense about seeing and hearing, and Mnesilochus' final confusion about what he sees/is to see or hear, heralds the dominant idea of the play, whereby nothing is quite what it seems, from the moment Agathon appears to the end, where everyone on stage, bar the Scythian, actually is, or is disguised as, a woman.

he emphasizes the depth of his displeasure by reference to the very seat of his emotions, his καρδία; this is picked up in τὸ κέαρ εὐφράνθην (5) and

12 πῶς τοῦτ' ἔσεισέ μου δοκεῖς τὴν καρδίαν;

When he reaches the real source of his annoyance, he has the graphic line

18 οὕτως ἐδήχθην ὑπὸ κονίας τὰς ὀφρῦς.

In fact, in 1–18 (bounded by δέδηγμαι and ἐδήχθην) two out of three lines have one or more words expressing strong emotion, some of them highly poetic: there are fourteen such in all.[33] The subsequent manifestations of this kind of emotional reaction become gradually more violent and unpleasant. The prytaneis enter with much jostling (40–2). When Amphitheos asks for his ἐφόδια, the archers are called to throw him out (54).[34] When the same man brings in the spondai, the Acharnians need but one sniff before they give vigorous chase (179). Dicaeopolis fares little better when he is discovered celebrating his peace: their reaction is to stone first and ask questions afterwards (292 ff.). In order to make them listen to his explanation, Dicaeopolis himself is forced to the extreme measure of threatening to 'kill' the coal-scuttle (325 ff.). Then, after being given permission to speak, he puts much emphasis upon the violence of Athenian reactions towards their opponents: he does not so much defend the Spartans as attack the Athenians. First of all, there is Pericles' reaction to the theft of Aspasia's harlots:

530 ἐντεῦθεν ὀργῆι Περικλέης οὐλύμπιος
ἤστραπτ', ἐβρόντα, ξυνεκύκα τὴν Ἑλλάδα.

The excessive nature of this becomes clear through the implied comparison with the Megarian reaction, which repaid the theft of a prostitute with a crime of the same sort, not with a cosmic upheaval. Dicaeopolis then constructs the likely Athenian response to the slightest example of Spartan sanction-breaking: once again, a hasty and violent reaction is envisaged, this time on an even greater scale, as a virtuoso section of nine lines of genitives shows (546–54).

We are presented, therefore, with a world in which violence (especially Athenian violence) is the main characteristic, whether in political, legal or inter-state affairs, and where the only way to achieve anything is to resort to similar extreme measures – private treaties, threats to kill 'children' and so on. This point is emphasized after Dicaeopolis' speech. Half of the chorus have seen the point, but the other half respond in the traditional manner: they want him suppressed (562 f.), beaten (564) and, when they are prevented, call out the army:

566 Ἰὼ Λάμαχ', ὦ βλέπων ἀστραπάς,
βοήθησον, ὦ γοργολόφα, φανείς.

Lamachus, who enters in response to this, takes a similarly hostile line, but in a foretaste of what is to come, he tends to come off worst against Dicaeopolis.[35] He is,

[33] Poetic or high-style words: 1 δέδηγμαι; 18 ἐδήχθην; 3, 9 ὠδυνήθην; 7 ἐγανώθην; 4 χαιρηδόνος (only here). For Dicaeopolis' repeated references to his heart, cf. 480–9 with its fourfold address to his θυμός (480, 483) and καρδία (485, 489). Elsewhere in Aristophanes, such apostrophes are rare: θυμός add 450, *Kn.* 1194 (sausage-seller at play's climax); ψυχή *Wasps* 756. On the problems of 'poetic' words in this passage cf. K. J. Dover, 'Lo stile di Aristofane', *QUCC* 9 (1970), 7–23, reprinted in Newiger (n. 1).

[34] For the actual identity of this man cf. J. G. Griffith, 'Amphitheos and Anthropos in Aristophanes', *Hermes* 102 (1974), 367–9.

[35] In many ways the Lamachus episode forms a ring with the opening scenes of the play: there are further references to the luxurious life-style of the young (601–6, 614–17); to the misuse of μισθοί (597, 608, 619), again with reference to Thrace (602); 606 Καταγέλαι picks up 76 τὸν καταγέλων τῶν πρέσβεων; 613 and 64 refer to Ecbatana; 592 repeats the obscenity of 158. This ring-composition prepares for the repetition of the themes in the parabasis which follows.

however, unrepentant, and goes off vowing to maintain the hostile Athenian reaction to the Spartans, as the chorus did earlier (226–33):

620 ἀλλ' οὖν ἐγὼ μὲν πᾶσι Πελοποννησίοις
ἀεὶ πολεμήσω καὶ ταράξω πανταχῆι,
καὶ ναυσὶ καὶ πεζοῖσι, κατὰ τὸ καρτερόν.

Unlike the chorus, he has yet to learn his lesson, which will occupy part of the second half of the play. The hasty nature of the Athenians and the rapid way in which the chorus are won over (626) are then parodied in the opening of the anapaests:[36]

630 διαβαλλόμενος δ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐν 'Αθηναίοις ταχυβούλοις

632 ἀποκρίνασθαι δεῖται νυνὶ πρὸς 'Αθηναίους μεταβούλους.

By the time we reach this point, therefore, Aristophanes has prepared the ground in such a way that his own self-defence against the charges of slandering the city appears to be eminently justified. Having shown the city to be a place where hasty, ill-considered reactions are the norm, he goes on in the parabasis to repeat these faults in a slightly different manner, so that the parabasis acts as a focus for the moral criticisms implied in the first half of the play. I pass now therefore to discuss the way in which the details of the parabasis either prepare for or indicate the nature of the improvements wrought by Dicaeopolis' treaty, which are to be illustrated in the second half.

3. The world mended. The first point follows from the last. Where the world of part one is one of violence, Dicaeopolis' new world is one where the pleasures of peace dominate, as he had prayed at his rural Dionysia, where he asked to be στρατιᾶς ἀπαλλαχθέντα (251; cf. 201, 269 f., 279). Foremost amongst these are feasting and revelry, and the second half takes place mostly during Dicaeopolis' preparations for his meal. In the first part, things needed for the production of feasts are put to the wrong use; as Whitman says, coals and fire are images of hostility early in the play, but become beneficial later,[37] and one may add the use of the kitchen chopping-board as a potential chopping-block. After the treaty, things are better: Dicaeopolis is almost solely concerned with feasting; the chorus vow never to invite Polemus, the destroyer of vines, to their table (977 ff.);[38] vines, to whose destruction the first half alludes (cf. 183, 232, 512), are replanted at 995–9, and at 1178 have their revenge on warmongers, as the vine-pole wounds Lamachus. This contrast between the old and new worlds is brought out most clearly and extensively in the two scenes where Lamachus, trapped in the old world, prepares for war and returns wounded, whilst the rejuvenated Dicaeopolis prepares for his feasts and their attendant delights (1072–1142, 1190–end).[39]

This change from violence to feasting is marked by the ode of the parabasis. Up to this point the Acharnians have symbolized violence in the play, starting with

[36] On these two words cf. Weber (n. 22), p. 80.

[37] Cf. Whitman (n. 18), pp. 70 f.

[38] I agree with W. Rennie, *The Acharnians of Aristophanes* (London, 1909), p. 234, that 971–99 are not a 'second' parabasis: 'as there are no anapaests and the metre is cretic throughout with the exception of 987 = 999 trochaic tetrameter, it is hard to see more than the strophe and antistrophe of an ordinary stasimon'. So also H.-J. Newiger, *Metapher und Allegorie* (Munich, 1957), p. 70 n. 3, and Sifakis, p. 35.

[39] Cf. Whitman (n. 18), p. 73. Lamachus at this point recalls the Acharnians in the parodos: both are injured in the leg (219, 1177–9); stones are involved (236, 1180); they are both afraid of mockery (221 ἐγχάνηι, 1197 ἐγχάνοι); 1188, from the *Telephus*, applied now to Lamachus, suggests that he has taken over the role of the sufferer from Dicaeopolis or the chorus.

Amphitheos' first description of them (178–85). The first lines of the ode suggest this is to continue (cf. 179–81):

665 δεῦρο Μοῦσ' ἐλθὲ φλεγυρὰ πυρὸς ἔ-
χουσα μένος ἔντονος Ἀχαρνική.
οἷον ἐξ ἀνθράκων πρινίνων φέψαλος ἀν-
ήλατ' ἐρεθιζόμενος οὐρίαι ῥιπίδι.

but it soon becomes clear that the fire will be used for cooking, not violence.[40] Furthemore, the ode prepares for the picture of the chorus as simple old men, which appears in the epirrhema and continues through the rest of the play: they are not referred to as Acharnians again.

This picture of the chorus brings us to the second area where Dicaeopolis has made improvement: the relationships between youth and age. The chorus complain generally about their treatment by the young in the law-courts, and their remarks recall the fact that in the first part of the play the Marathon-fighters have clearly lost their control in the assembly, the courts (cf. Cleon, 377 ff.) and the army. This situation was there symbolized by their regrets about their lost vitality during their chasing of Amphitheos (210–21), and is picked up with special reference to the young in their contrast between what Thucydides could have done if he had still been young and his present plight (707–12).[41] Despite their boisterous pursuit of Dicaeopolis, the chorus are now seen in fact to be pathetically impotent. Furthermore, not only are the young in power but, to make matters worse, they are morally corrupt, being addicted to perverted sexual practices,[42] and preferring a luxurious life-style on embassies to service in the ranks. Their sexual perversity is referred to at a number of points. When the ambassador says that the barbarians consider as true men those who can eat and drink heartily, Dicaeopolis dryly replies

79 ἡμεῖς δὲ λαικαστάς τε καὶ καταπύγονας

The perverts Cleisthenes and Straton form part of the deceptive embassy (117–22); Cleon's prosecution of Dicaeopolis is described in terms of homosexual rape: κατεγλώττιζε, μολυνοπραγμονούμενος (379–82); Dicaeopolis hints at such preferences in Lamachus

592 τί μ' οὐκ ἀπεψώλησας; εὔοπλος γὰρ εἶ

and in the soldiery ἐν Χάοσιν (604);[43] and the cause of the war was the theft of a prostitute by incontinent νεανίαι μεθυσοκότταβοι (525). This notion is then picked up in the parabasis, in the description of Cleon as λακαταπύγων (664) and the recommendation that the young should be prosecuted by one who is εὐρύπρωκτος καὶ λάλος χὠ Κλεινίου (716).

As Henderson has shown, this perverted sexuality is to be replaced by the normal and earthy sexuality of Dicaeopolis' rural Dionysia, with its hymn to Phales μοιχὲ παιδεραστά about enjoying the slave girl caught stealing (263 ff.). In part two,

[40] For ἔντονος = 'impetuoso, veemente', cf. A. C. Cassio, 'ἐντείνεσθαι, ἔντονος ed il nomos orthios', *RFIC* 99 (1971), 56. For this kind of change during the parabasis, compare the *Birds*, where the recital of the Creation myth leads to the new world where humans sprout their wings and rout the gods with the help of their bird-allies.

[41] Thucydides' fate as one ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς τοξότου κυκώμενον (707) links him to Amphitheos expelled by the Archers (54); cf. 711 f.

[42] Cf. Henderson (n. 12), p. 59. His whole essay on *Acharnians* (pp. 57–62) should be consulted on this topic.

[43] ibid. pp. 182, 175, 211; *LSJ*[9] *s.v.* μολύνω I. 1.

Dicaeopolis looks forward to the maturing of the χοῖροι he has bought (781 ff.);[44] he gives some of his treaty-wine to the bride

1060 ὅπως ἂν οἰκουρῇι τὸ πέος τοῦ νυμφίου

and delights in the physical charms of the slave girls (1199–1201, 1216–21); the chorus celebrate the absence of the perverts Prepis and Cleonymus (843–4) and also of the libertine Cratinus (849); and try to convince Diallage that they are not too old to enjoy her (989–99). Order is thus restored on the sexual front.[45]

The addiction of the young to embassies has been amply exemplified at the start of the play, and though no explicit reference is made to it in the parabasis, mention of it can be made here as part of the case against the young. Dicaeopolis emphasizes it at the end of the first part in his angry reply to Lamachus:

599 ταῦτ' οὖν ἐγὼ βδελυττόμενος ἐσπεισάμην,
ὁρῶν πολιοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας ἐν ταῖς τάξεσιν,
νεανίας δ' οἵους σὺ διαδεδρακότας,
τοὺς μὲν ἐπὶ Θράικης μισθοφοροῦντας τρεῖς δραχμάς...

He goes on to ask if any of the chorus of old men have ever been on an embassy, but none has: it is the privilege of

614 ὁ Κοισύρας καὶ Λάμαχος,
οἷς ὑπ' ἐράνου τε καὶ χρεῶν πρώην ποτέ,
ὥσπερ ἀπόνιπτρον ἐκχέοντες ἐσπέρας,
ἅπαντες "ἐξίστω" παρήινουν οἱ φίλοι.

This topsy-turvy world, where the young have the easy life and the old bear the brunt is put to rights later, when the 'young' Lamachus sets off to fight in the snow, while Dicaeopolis stays at home to enjoy the fruits of his labours.[46]

The chorus's explicit objection is to the actions of the young in the law-courts, and, though we do not have any law-court scenes in the play, the ideas of attack, prosecution and defence are, as I have said, very common, not only in the physical sense, but also in a legal one, in Dicaeopolis' speech in self-defence, and Cleon's prosecution of Dicaeopolis/Aristophanes. The two senses are united in the chorus's pun:[47]

698 εἶτα Μαραθῶνι μὲν ὅτ' ἦμεν, ἐδιώκομεν,
νῦν δ' ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν πονηρῶν σφόδρα δι-
ωκόμεθα, κἄιτα πρὸς ἁλισκόμεθα.

By contrast, it is often stated in the second half that δίκαι will have no part in the new world. Dicaeopolis immediately forbids entry to any συκοφάντης or Φασιανὸς ἀνήρ (725 f.); the first sycophant is swiftly dispatched, when he tries the old trick of instant denunciation (818 ff.); Dicaeopolis will be free of Ctesias and sycophants generally (840); Hyperbolus will not involve him in δίκαι (846 f.);[48] finally, Nicarchus,

[44] On this use of χοῖρος cf. L. Radermacher, 'Χοῖρος "Mädchen"?', *Rh.M.* 89 (1940), 236–8; F. I. Zeitlin, 'The Dynamics of Misogyny in the Oresteia', *Arethusa* 11 (1978), 165 f., with n. 18.

[45] Cf. H. Erbse, 'Zu Aristophanes', *Eranos* 52 (1954), 81–7.

[46] P. Pucci, 'Saggio sulle Nuvole', *Maia* 12 (1960), 27, sees here a comic reversal of the usual situation where the young fight in battle, while the old excel in speaking; cf. 71 f.

[47] The verbs διώκω, φεύγω occur five (185, 204, 216, 221, 235) and six (177bis, 203, 210, 217, 222) times respectively in the sixty lines from Amphitheos' departure to the Acharnians' encounter with Dicaeopolis (174–236).

[48] The choral ode 836–59 thus contains three of the four main problems that Dicaeopolis will be free of: sycophancy and law-suits, sexual misdemeanours and hunger (854–9). The exclusion of the musically hasty Artemon is also noteworthy (850 f.).

the τριπτὴρ δικῶν (937), is symbolically exported to Boeotia (910 ff.). By the end, therefore, Lamachus' threat

1128 ἐν τῶι χαλκίωι
ἐνορῶ γέροντα δειλίας φευξούμενον

carries little conviction.

The final area in which Dicaeopolis has wrought improvements is in Athens' foreign relations, which brings us back to the ambassadors at the start of the play. In the anapaests, Aristophanes claimed that he had defended the Athenians against the ξενικοὶ λόγοι of people like Pseudartabas, and the second part of the play begins in a similar fashion with the Megarian and the Boeotian also speaking ξενικῶς. Like Pseudartabas, the Megarian comes with the intention of deceiving:

736 τίς δ' οὕτως ἄνους
ὃς ὑμέ κα πρίαιτο, φανερὰν ζαμίαν;
ἀλλ' ἔστι γάρ μοι Μεγαρικά τις μαχανά.

In these cases, however, the tables are turned, and far from being deceived, Dicaeopolis, after a successful examination of the χοῖροι (764 ff., cf. 110), gets much the better of the bargain, acquiring the Megarian's two daughters for a string of garlic and a *choinix* of salt, and then later the Boeotian's game for the sycophant Nicarchus as a pot (with a tax of a Copaic eel into the bargain); the Megarian would happily sell his wife and mother at the same price (816 f.) and counts himself lucky to have filched a single fig. Although neither of these traders exactly gets a fair price for his wares, the mere fact that they are allowed to trade with Dicaeopolis is a sign of an improvement over the old world, with its Megarian Decree.[49] Dicaeopolis has now gained control of the markets that will allow him to continue his feasting: his treaty has thus put right the problems both internal and external. The feast most immediately in the offing is that with the priest of Dionysus, and it is a sign that the old world has truly passed away for Dicaeopolis that when the invitation is brought the messenger has to tell him to hurry up:

1088 ἀλλ' ἐγκόνει· δειπνεῖν κατακωλύεις πάλαι.

That Dicaeopolis should now be holding up a feast provides a satisfying change of role for one who used to be kept waiting until midday for the Assembly to begin its proceedings (17 ff.).[50]

4. *Some conclusions.* The parabasis is important, therefore, for the way in which it indicates and emphasizes those themes and ideas in the play that are the chief bearers of meaning. By stressing the notions of violent reaction and hasty suppression of opponents, the parabasis makes it clearer that these are what link the diverse scenes

[49] On the Megarian Decree (or decrees), see de Ste Croix (n. 14), pp. 225–89 (esp. 237–44 on *Acharnians*), and App. xxxvi (pp. 383–6) for a historical interpretation of 515–23; J. Schwarze, *Die Beurteilung des Perikles durch die attische Komödie* (Munich, 1971), pp. 135–9.

[50] The closing scenes of the play also indicate a number of detailed improvements: the herald at 1000 inaugurates happier proceedings than that at 43; 1075, 1141 Lamachus suffers the frosts earlier inflicted on Dicaeopolis by Theognis' tragedies (11, 140); 1081, 1107, 1126 Lamachus is mocked by Dicaeopolis, where at 76, 606, 680 Athens or the old men were mocked (all καταγέλως, etc.); 1123 Dicaeopolis possesses the κριβανῖται earlier enjoyed by the ambassadors (85 f.); 1218 Lamachus swoons at his wound as Dicaeopolis had done at his armour (581, both εἰλιγγιῶ); 1219 Lamachus complains σκοτοδινιῶ, where the chorus had seen only 684 τῆς δίκης τὴν ἠλύγην, at their time of trouble.

of the first part together. The parabasis thus indicates that the play is fundamentally about the Athenian over-reaction and ὀργή which has refused Spartan peace requests (538), reduced Megara and Boeotia to poverty and produced a violent society at home. However, it would I think be a mistake to see the play simply as a moral fable, enshrining Aristophanes' deepest convictions. It remains a comedy, for a number of reasons. The analysis is carried out in a typical comic black-and-white fashion: the basically good old generation *vs.* the bad and effete young generation; hostile city *vs.* peace-loving individual and so on. More importantly, the play contains a number of 'contradictions', which make it impossible to see it as a simple sermon.[51]

A good example of this is to be found in the embassy scene at the start of the play. In the parabasis, Aristophanes recalled the ξενικοὶ λόγοι and deception by ambassadors as things he and his hero were trying to protect Athens from. However, the idea that there is here an important point is seriously undermined by the manner in which Aristophanes constructs this scene. Pseudartabas' first line is strange enough to pass as a foreign language, but the second is manifestly Greek (of a sort), though the assembly seems not to notice. Dicaeopolis' (and our) suspicions are confirmed when Pseudartabas is cross-questioned and the two eunuchs nod in Greek fashion. When they are revealed as the perverts Cleisthenes and Straton, it is perfectly clear that this is no embassy at all, but a spoof, and yet the 'ambassadors' are still invited into the Prytaneion, as if none of this had happened. The play is thus operating on two levels: the story-line of Athenian gullibility before foreign envoys, which implies a serious point; and the actual details of the text, which show that Dicaeopolis is combating a mirage.

Even more important for our view of the play as a whole is the very idea of a *private* treaty which solves all the problems. Leaving aside the fantasy element involved in such a treaty, and allowing that the faults in society of the first half are put right in the second, one cannot deny that, as has been pointed out,[52] the only person who benefits from all this is Dicaeopolis: the city as a whole benefits not at all. One cannot, therefore, argue that the play is simply a 'plea for peace': one reason why Dicaeopolis does so well is that he is the only person enjoying the trade of Megara and Boeotia. At no point in the play does anyone draw the conclusion that the Athenians should follow the example of Dicaeopolis, and the second half of the play is as much concerned with the glorification of Dicaeopolis' self-indulgence as with any celebration of the delights of peace.

Indeed, Aristophanes lays considerable emphasis on this selfish aspect of Dicaeopolis' actions. The theme appears unobtrusively at first when he (not surprisingly) refuses the request of the servant of Lamachus (959 ff.). It appears again as the chorus express their envy at his prosperity and Dicaeopolis, instead of inviting these men whom he has persuaded of the justice of his cause and who have supported him, merely tantalizes them:

1011 τί δῆτ' ἐπειδὰν τὰς κίχλας
ὀπτωμένας ἴδητε;

[51] Perhaps the clearest example of a 'contradiction' is found in *Lys.* 1137 ff., where Lysistrata attempts a reconciliation by reminding the Spartans how Athens came to her aid in 462, which, if serious, would hardly be tactful: καὶ διαφορὰ ἐκ ταύτης τῆς στρατείας πρῶτον Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ Ἀθηναίοις φανερὰ ἐγένετο (Thuc. 1. 102. 3). Nor would the Athenians have been terribly pleased to be reminded of how they had had to join the Peloponnesian League after Sparta had 'liberated' them from Hippias.

[52] Cf. e.g. Dover (n. 2), pp. 87 f.

It is then brought out most strikingly and worryingly in the unhappy scene with the farmer, to whose request for help Dicaeopolis replies in the harshest terms:

1030 ἀλλ', ὦ πόνηρ', οὐ δημοσιεύων τυγχάνω.

Not a drop will he give him (1035). At the end of the scene, the chorus repeat the point they made on the departure of Lamachus' servant:

1044 ἀποκτενεῖς λιμῶι 'μέ.

He does give the bride some of the treaty-wine, but for no more serious reason than that he finds what the bridesmaid has to say γέλοιον (1058).

In effect, therefore, the second half of the play mirrors the first as much in a morally negative way as in a positive one. Dicaeopolis reopens trade with Megara and Boeotia, but on terms that are scarcely equitable and would well justify the sort of complaints from the allies that Aristophanes had dealt with in the *Babylonians*. I have already suggested that in the scenes of requests to Dicaeopolis we are to see the rejection of war (Lamachus) and the promotion of healthy sexuality (the bride), but this is to leave out the scene with the farmer, to whom Dicaeopolis appears to be gratuitously cruel: why is he so treated? An answer to this problem may, I think, be found once again in a parallelism between the two halves of the play. In the assembly, Amphitheos asked for and was refused his ἐφόδια (53); asked who he was, he replied with a long genealogy which linked him with the goddess Demeter and the hero Triptolemus, patrons of agriculture. Russo interprets this as a sign that Amphitheos is a further representative of the rustic element in the play that is to triumph over the urban. One might however take this scene as a significant parallel to that with the farmer: in each, a rustic figure is refused a reasonable request, because it does not please someone to grant it: the farmer, who has lost his ploughing-oxen, is denied like Amphitheos, a descendant of the hero who, in Athenian propaganda, first taught men to plough.[53] Where Dicaeopolis and his friends were earlier the victims of arbitrary injustice, he is now handing it out. Indeed, it is instructive to look at Dicaeopolis' actions from the point of view of an excluded Athenian. To him, the keeping of the bridegroom from his military service is not going to help the war effort; the sycophants may be a despised race, but in this play they are merely exposing a selfish and unpatriotic series of transactions on the part of Dicaeopolis, which help him and Athens' enemies along; even the bogy of the first part, Lamachus, is shown, despite the ludicrous manner of his wounding, to have enough spirit to rise and drive off the city's enemies (1187 f.). Though the drift and argument of the play appears, therefore, to be setting up Dicaeopolis as a paragon and an example of how to deal with the war, when one views his actions from the point of view of the city as a whole it is clear that they do not, in many ways, represent a significant improvement on what has gone before.

If this analysis be allowed, we need to reconsider too the role that Aristophanes gives himself in all this, since he has been at such pains to identify himself with his hero. That he should link himself with so ambiguous a character as Dicaeopolis immediately suggests that the play will not have any simple 'message'. If Aristophanes were being serious in the parabasis and implying a contrast between himself and his *alazon* of a hero, then the play could be read in a straightforward manner, but the links and similarities between them specifically preclude this. Indeed, the links imply that Aristophanes is possessed of as much *alazoneia* as his hero, and this implication can be given further support by a review of their positions *vis-à-vis* the war. In his

[53] Cf. C. F. Russo, *Aristofane, Gli Acarnesi* (Bari, 1953), p. 150. For Triptolemus cf. N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 194–6.

major speech, Dicaeopolis complained of the Athenian refusal of the Spartan peace overtures (535–8). Aristophanes treats the subject in a more cavalier manner. He claims that the Persian king has seen him as the key to victory, and goes on:

652 διὰ ταῦθ' ὑμᾶς Λακεδαιμόνιοι τὴν εἰρήνην προκαλοῦνται
καὶ τὴν Αἴγιναν ἀπαιτοῦσιν· καὶ τῆς νήσου μὲν ἐκείνης
οὐ φροντίζουσ', ἀλλ' ἵνα τοῦτον τὸν ποιητὴν ἀφέλωνται.
ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς τοι μή ποτ' ἀφῆσθ'.

Here, not only does he present himself as the man most likely to win the war, but he provides, in the reference to Aegina, an important further similarity between himself and Dicaeopolis. If we take the reference at its face value, we must presume that Aristophanes had estates or some other close connection with that island, upon which Spartan occupation would infringe. Just as, therefore, Dicaeopolis is safe from the perils of war behind the boundary of his agora (719), so Aristophanes on Aegina will remain free from the hardships of those crammed into the city, so long as Aegina is not sacrificed to the Spartans in return for peace.[54]

There is a final point. The picture of Dicaeopolis that develops through the play is remarkably similar to that of Aristophanes given in the anapaests. They both begin with an essentially sympathetic view of a man unjustly treated by the rest of society, and this sympathy is increased by the demonstration or recital of his good qualities, in Dicaeopolis' objective review of Athenian policy and in Aristophanes' list of his benefits to the state. In the last analysis, however, the *alazoneia* breaks out, as Dicaeopolis' peace is seen to benefit him alone, and Aristophanes' account of his merits becomes grotesquely self-regarding. The figure of Telephus, who features so largely in the play, is again paradigmatic: he saved himself by betraying Troy just as Dicaeopolis and Aristophanes are more concerned with their own condition than that of the city. All of this has implications for how far one should discern a truly serious intent behind the comedy.[55] I suggest that this is not possible: serious matters are touched on, but are not tackled in a serious manner – the play uses burlesque rather than satire. The delights of peace are extolled to a war-bound audience, but they turn out to be the delights of one man; the poet sets himself up as a commentator on the follies of the city, but is concerned ultimately with his own comfort. Indeed, 'Aristophanes the man', the social commentator ironically viewing the events of the play from without, is not to be found: 'Aristophanes' is identified with a selfish and solipsistic hero, and his 'personal' statement in the parabasis is no more than the play in miniature; he is as much a literary construct as his hero. All in all, the serious and the comic are blended in a brilliantly kaleidoscopic way, which would fully justify the chorus's complaint at the rhetorical subtleties of the younger generation.[56]

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[54] Admittedly, this joke is not fully understood, though it is hard to see what else it could mean. The scholiasts only underline the problem: that on 653 says Aristophanes had land on Aegina; that on 654 states first that Aristophanes was a cleruch there, but then says that οὐδεὶς ἱστόρηκεν ὡς ἐν Αἰγίνῃ κέκτηταί τι Ἀριστοφάνης and that it is likely that Callistratus is meant, who was a cleruch (cf. schol. on Pl. *Apol.* 19c). The reference to Callistratus is no doubt to be explained as the result of the mistaken belief that he is the 'I' of the parabasis.

[55] The case for a serious message behind Aristophanes' comedies has been restated by McLeish (n. 2), pp. 56–62.

[56] The relationship between play and parabasis here described is not unique to *Acharnians*, as I hope to show subsequently. For reading drafts of this paper I wish to thank R. D. Hunter and R. J. Seager; they helped me to see certain problems more clearly and provided useful references.