

KOSMOS

*Essays in order, conflict and
community in classical Athens*

edited by

PAUL CARTLEDGE

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I

*Introduction: defining a kosmos*¹

PAUL CARTLEDGE

This introductory chapter seeks to do two things above all. First, it attempts to position our collection intellectually, both in relation to recent movements of sociological and anthropological theory about interpersonal relations, and in relation to the recent developments of scholarship specifically on ancient Greek and Athenian social history. Second, it aims more briefly to introduce the papers included hereafter in this collection.

THEME AND PROBLEMATIC

What is principally at issue throughout the volume is the nature of sociability and interpersonal transactions within the peculiar Greek political community that went under the name of *polis* (cf. Cartledge 1996), and specifically within the Athenian democratic *polis* of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. We are not here interested primarily in the expressions of such relationships at the most formal, central and public political levels; that was the business of Cartledge, Millett & Todd 1990. On the other hand, we have not excluded them altogether, since the ancient city was a relatively stateless political community lacking the sharp distinctions or oppositions all too familiar today between the State and the rest of the citizen community, and between the public and the private, and lacking consequently any intermediary 'civil society' between the individual, either as such or as a member of a family unit, and the State (Berent 1996). Politics in a Greek city, in other words, was also a social affair, not something best left to the politicians, and society, conversely, was also political. The Greek term *politeia*, correspondingly, could mean both political constitution narrowly conceived and more broadly society (Ober 1993).

¹ It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the stimulus and assistance I have received especially from my co-editor Sitta von Reden in the writing of this introductory chapter. I wish also to register the debt I owe to two former graduate students who are specialists in ancient and modern political thought, Danielle Allen and Moshe Berent, and the much greater one, accumulated over many years, to my two senior Cambridge colleagues Pat Easterling and Geoffrey Lloyd.

In this respect, at least, Athens was a normal Greek city. But it was not so in every way, by any means. Todd (1993: 156–7), for example, has rightly stressed the Athenian community's unique size, degree of urbanisation, and collective wealth. Athens was also an unusually heterogeneous, complex, and democratic city, the most consciously progressive, the most intensely narcissistic in Greece:

Athens in the fourth century BC was a society characterized by (a) fundamental differences between citizens and noncitizens, and inequalities between sociologically defined groups within the citizenry; (b) both conflict and identity of interests between and within the diverse groups; (c) a set of rules, norms, and practices – enunciated by the *demos* (mass of ordinary citizens qua dominant political element) and perpetuated by popular ideology – which required the consent of potentially disruptive sub-groups (notably the Athenian elites). (Ober 1993: 141)

Yet despite all that, it was also an unusually stable city, especially in the fourth century (cf. Eder 1995) from which most of the extant evidence comes and to which it chiefly applies. Ober continues by asking whether Athens' relative stability as a society in the fourth century was achieved and maintained because the various parts of the democratic *polis* consented to the *demos*'s rules, norms and practices, recognising them as substantively just, or whether their consent was based on deception or even coerced. For the most part, we shall not be operating here at such an explicit level of political analysis in terms of consent or coercion. Conflict and identity, on the other hand, are no less of the essence in our project than in Ober's.

So too, but even more so, is stability. Comparison of Athens with two other notably stable pre-modern polities offers a useful starting point. Of these Sparta might perhaps be thought even to have pre-empted our title *kosmos*. Herodotos (1.65.4) wrote that it was Lycurgus, an at least semi-legendary founding lawgiver, who established the Spartans' *kosmos*, and several modern scholars have seized on this word as the *leitmotif* of their enquiries into Spartan politics and society (Missoni 1984; Bringmann 1986; Nafissi 1991; Link 1994). But *kosmos*, as we shall demonstrate, was a universal Greek term susceptible of more than one local construction. If the hallmark of conservative Sparta's social *ordnung* was *geschlossenheit*, that of Athens, by contrast, was its progressive openness, in its own as well as others' estimation.

A second useful comparison, and contrast, would be with pre-modern Venice, the political stability of which aroused even Machiavelli's warm admiration. An integral feature of this was Venice's conspicuous success at maintaining public order, which has been attributed to a harmonious combination of factors including the impartial application of law, the self-discipline of the governing class, and the ability of that class to increase social cohesion through both paternalistic policies and the highly ritualised symbolic integration of citizenry (Nippel 1995: 114–15). Mediaeval Venice,

of course, was no more democratic than ancient Sparta, but the Venetian oligarchy's use of ritual and symbol for integrative social purposes is a factor to which we shall be returning in more than one connection.

FROM THE COSMETIC TO THE COSMIC

Cosmos (with a 'C') is a standard English word with a Greek etymology. It has broadly two senses: first, the more or less empirically determinable and testable physical universe of black holes, the Hubble telescope, and Stephen Hawking; second, the metaphysical universes (in either a strictly religious or a more vaguely spiritual construction) of the cosmologists, theologians, poets, artists and philosophers. In non-standard English, Kosmos with a 'K' has appeared esoterically in Whitman's famous 'Song of Myself' poem cycle ('Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son . . .'). In German, to cite only one intellectual landmark, it has served as the title of Alexander von Humboldt's five-volume *physische Weltbeschreibung* (1845–62). But our 'Kosmos' is none of those. It re-presents, rather than merely transliterates, the original Greek word, in its original sense. That original sense is order.

Already in Homer we find derived usages of *kosmos*, such as the prepositional phrase *kata kosmon* ('in order', 'duly', for example *Iliad* 10.472) and the adverbial *kosmiōs* ('Very fittingly [did you sing the fate of the Achaeans]': *Odyssey* 8.489); the latter is a reference perhaps not simply to the formal quality of Demodokos' song but also to its truth-value (von Reden 1995b: 36). Since order was considered beautiful, *kosmos* came next to mean adornment, as in our own 'cosmetic(s)' (van Straten 1992: 268–9). Gorgias the Sophist, composing an encomium of Helen, makes her claim punningly that 'For a city the finest *kosmos* [both order and adornment] is a good citizenry, for a body beauty, for a soul wisdom, for an action *aretē* [virtue], and for a speech truth' (fr. 11.1 D–K; trans. Gagarin & Woodruff 1995: 191).

This last usage rests on the cusp between the pre-philosophical and the philosophical. As early as about 500, perhaps, the Pythagorean sectaries had been using the word to describe orderliness in nature (as opposed to human culture or adornment). But the meaning 'world-order' seems not to have emerged much if at all before the mid-fifth century, the first certain extant instance of the usage being by Empedokles (no. 397 in Kirk, Raven & Schofield 1983; though see perhaps already Herakleitos, KRS no. 217). The dogma of the *kosmos* as unitary, divine, harmonious and mathematically ordered took shape only after the mid-fifth century, possibly under influence from the Near East.²

² Kranz 1955; Diller 1956; Kahn 1960b; Kerchensteiner 1962; Haebler 1967; Kirk, Raven & Schofield 1983: 159 n. 1; Deforge 1986.

An anonymous ancient commentator wrote wittily of Plato's work that ὁ διάλογος κόσμος ἔστιν καὶ ὁ κόσμος διάλογος ('the dialogue is a cosmos, and the cosmos a dialogue': Westerink 1962: 30–1). Yet even in Plato the newer, cosmic sense did not entirely supersede the earlier cultural-political usage of Gorgias and, before him, Herodotus. In the foundation myth ascribed to Protagoras by Plato, Zeus is said to have been afraid that the human *genos* would be entirely killed off. He therefore sent Hermes together with Aidos (Respect, Shame) and Dikē (Right, Justice) so that they might bring order (*kosmoi*, in the plural) to cities and serve as the communal bonds of friendship (*Protagoras* 322c; cf. 325d, where the abstract noun *eukosmia* is used to mean 'good conduct', in the sense of behaviour that is right and pious as well as orderly).

In short, if we were looking for an ancient Greek term current in our period that was equivalent to the modern phrase(s) '(the) social order', *kosmos* would be the nearest we could find. Thus fortified, we turn specifically to the question of how we are to approach an understanding of the order of our target society or community.

ATHENIAN COMMUNITY

'All societies', it has been claimed, are 'constructions in the face of chaos' (Berger & Luckman 1967: 11). But, if so, what sort of constructions are they, and how have they been put together, and how and why do they stay in place? There is a plethora of modern would-be explanatory models or theories of society or 'community'.³ Historians of classical Athens – 'all so unimaginably different, / And all so long ago', as Louis MacNeice put it in his *Autumn Journal* – can no doubt afford to adopt a somewhat more relaxed approach. Yet they too find themselves confronted by the need to select models of explanation that accommodate both remarkable social and political stability and considerable social and political change, including a decade (411–401 BCE) of sometimes paroxysmic internal political conflict.

³ Slaughter 1984 is a most helpful conspectus, by a sociologist. Arguably the most relevant and helpful modern theory of culture for our purposes is conceived in terms of ritual, which can itself be described and analysed in many ways: e.g., Gluckman 1977; Humphreys 1978; Morris 1992, 1993; Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994; Turner 1957, 1969, 1982. All ritualist theories of culture emphasise symbolic meaning and mentality rather than formal institutions and objective structures. A recent example – all the more interesting and relevant for our purposes in that it starts in the Athens of Pericles – is Richard Sennett's ambitious diachronic survey of the semiotics of urban architecture (1994). This exemplifies also work that aims to show how, despite the relativity of evaluative norms, the transitoriness of relationships, the fluidity of boundaries and the lability of structures, social as well as personal identity (or identities) is none the less somehow achieved, and belief in social practices secured, through shared metaphors, commonly felt emotions, and commonly understood images. Yet to focus excessively on (broadly) ideology to the exclusion of institutions or *vice versa* would seem undesirable: '[Natalie Zemon] Davis's and [E.P.] Thompson's stress on the examination of community and legitimacy must be reintegrated with the analysis of power, transformation and conflict' (Desan 1989: 71).

Perhaps we may start by noting a happy congruence of ancient Greek and modern theorising.

A combination of linguistics, anthropology, the study of mentalities, psychology and psychoanalysis, not to mention philosophy and history, has revealed 'the individual' to be not a thing-in-itself but a cultural construct (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 8–9 and n. 32). In most Greek political-moral theory too the normative standard of value was always 'the larger context of the good life of the community' (Gill 1995: 64 n. 64). So too in Athenian political rhetoric the community's interests systematically overrode those of the individual citizen, as for example in the last speech written by Thucydides for Pericles: 'I believe that if a city is sound as a whole, it does more good to its private citizens than if it benefits them as individuals while failing as a collective unit' (Thuc. 2.60.2, trans. Gagarin & Woodruff 1995: 100).

The 'community' or 'city' in question was the *polis*, and as a theorist of the Greek city as either a real or an imagined community there was no one in antiquity to rival Aristotle.⁴ According to the Aristotelian 'paradigm' (enunciated in *Nic. Eth.* 1159–60), the *polis* was the apex in a pyramid of hierarchical relationships between the city and the different kinds of smaller associations (*koinonai*). The *polis* of democratic Athens was a political macrocosm of which its smallest constituent unit, the deme, was both microcosm and model (cf. Osborne 1990a). Crucial to Aristotle's conception was scale: small – meaning no more than 10,000 adult male citizens – was for him beautiful. We speak today metaphorically of the global village, interlinked by a network of satellites and fiber-optic cables. Classical Athens was, by Greek standards, a global village in and of itself.

It is, however, noteworthy, and perhaps culpable, that Aristotle's discussion of the political identity of a city pays no explicit or direct attention to the role of the simpler forms of association (family, village). That defect will be remedied in the chapters below. Moreover, classical Athens was not just any ordinary, let alone typical or normal, Greek city. Because of its size and complexity a certain amount of not entirely profitable debate has therefore been generated over whether Athens may usefully be labelled, like most other Greek cities, a 'face-to-face community'. In lived reality, no doubt, it cannot be, in the strong sense, in that all its members did not regularly interact in person and that such personal interaction was not of the essence of Athenian community. But the 140 or so demes certainly were face-to-face communities, and it was as a face-to-face community that the *polis* of Athens did at any rate imagine itself. This indeed was a central aspect of what Loraux, borrowing from the contemporary Greek political

⁴ Studies on Aristotle's political philosophy are legion. A small, recent selection in English might include Yack 1985, 1993; Ober 1991, 1993 (= 1996: ch. 11); Salkever 1991; Murray 1993.

theorist Cornelius Castoriadis, has called Athens' 'Civic Imaginary'.⁵ Athenian democratic civic ideology was uniquely inclusive (Hanson 1995: 367–8), and myths of community served to unite people who were in fact of different origins and customs (Strauss 1994: 264; cf. Loraux 1986).

Not all members of the Athenian *koinonia*, however, were relevantly equal. Democracy's strong egalitarianism, for citizens, almost necessarily entailed inequality of status and status-honour for 'others', that is for all those persons who in Aristotle's formulation were necessary for but not of the *polis* in the sense of its *politeuma* (citizen-body). These 'others' were manifold: women of citizen status as well as foreign or unfree women; foreign men, non-resident as well as resident; and many thousands of slaves – Greek, barbarian, male, female. Of course, status boundaries might be crossed informally, and in rare cases formally (at the limit, when a male ex-slave became a citizen). But such marginality by definition challenged and blurred as well as reinforced status boundaries: for instance, the category of 'the *hetaira*' (conventionally translated 'courtesan') did so both discursively and objectively.

We should not therefore allow Aristotle's harmonious organicist model of the *polis* to deceive us into overlooking or underestimating the 'tensions generated by the play of difference between and within the society of citizens, civil society, and society at large' (Ober 1993: 148). One important site for proving – that is, testing – the rule of harmonious inclusivity is the Piraeus, which was both a constituent political part of 'Athens' and (almost) a second Athens, both an Athenian deme and a multi-ethnic, inter-cultural commercial community, a source of tension as well as solidarity (von Reden 1995c).

ATHENS: THE JUST CITY?

Dikē we have met already in Plato's *Protagoras* myth. It was the theme also of Cartledge et al. 1990. *Dikē* in one of its senses meant the formal mechanisms of legal justice, and Hansen is we believe quite right to insist that institutions can matter, or even make the difference (1989a; cf. Kallet-Marx 1994). But *nomos* meant custom and convention as well as law or statute; and the line between the formal and the informal was blurred in theory as in practice. To abstract 'the political' from all other forms of social interaction, privileging legal criteria and institutions in definitions of

⁵ Loraux 1993; cf. Lévêque & Vidal-Naquet 1996, which includes a contribution by Castoriadis himself at 119–27. On the category of 'the imaginary', involving the notions of popular and civic myth and the invention and reinvention of traditions, see comparatively Anderson 1991; Genovese 1994. Within traditions, it has been suggested, dialectical tensions of individual against collective, of past against present, and of internal against external 'are articulated and give impetus to current social change in the guise of continuity': Crowther 1994: 101.

citizen and citizenship, has therefore properly been stigmatised as a retrograde form of 'constitutionalism' (A. Scafuro in Boegehold & Scafuro 1994). Besides, the authority and legitimacy of popular rule (cf. Finley 1982) and the hegemony of the masses over the elite in lawcourt and Assembly (cf. Ober 1989) depended on consensual and contractual exercise of and respect for popular judgment, rather than on what we would understand more narrowly by the rule of law. Athens had nothing like a modern police force (cf. Nippel 1995); indeed, arguably, it had nothing much like a modern State (Berent 1994, 1996). The activities of cult associations, for example, despite their importance to Athenian society at large, were not regulated by a comprehensive or even by a partial set of legal provisions imposed and policed by an all-powerful impersonal State. Hence the overriding importance to the maintenance of (the) social order of classical Athens of a rich variety of informal social controls and protocols.

Negatively, this is largely what explains Aristotle's emphasis on habituation as being essential to individual and social virtue, and his insistence on the overriding necessity of self-control. Failing that, Athenian neighbourhoods had to rely on informal networks of help, including self-help, and mutual discipline.⁶ No doubt it would be far too extreme to apply to the real world of classical Athens Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' scheme, which relied on the fiction that each prisoner, alone in his cell, imagines he is under constant surveillance, while the panopticon itself is constantly open to 'the great open committee of the tribunal of the world'; nevertheless, it is perhaps a good deal closer to the truth than the roseate, ideologically tinged picture painted by Thucydides' Pericles, according to which 'far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty' (Thuc. 2.37.2, trans. R. Crawley).⁷ Ideally, no doubt, the radius of trust should so extend to the whole citizen body that all members of it could plausibly be considered mutual 'friends'. But the lived reality was a precarious balance of friendship and enmity, not made any more secure by the traditional moral injunction to harm one's enemies as much as or more than one should help one's friends (Fisher 1976, 1992; Mitchell & Rhodes 1996; Konstan 1997).

The other side of formal and informal restraint and discipline was a positive emphasis on reciprocity, a philosophy (if that is not too grand a word) grounded ultimately in the economics of peasant self-sufficiency

⁶ Winkler 1990a; Cohen 1991, 1995b; Hunter 1990, 1994. For a modern comparison see Ellickson 1991.

⁷ In a series of papers Herman (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996) has argued that the Periclean view should also be pretty literally believed by us.

combined with a certain amount of necessary exchange.⁸ Such a notion might appropriately be given the backing of legal sanction. In the sphere of punishment, for example, reciprocity allowed for or enjoined a reasonable passion or anger-driven revenge, so as to enshrine the foul deed paradigmatically in the social memory (Allen 1996). Also legally enforceable, on the positive side, were festival liturgies, which constituted a species of euergetism designed to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor for the performance of essential communal services; in return, ideally, a reverse current of increased honour and prestige would flow to the wealthy benefactor.⁹

That leads us straight to the second of the crucial positive factors underpinning the Athenian social fabric: ritual in all its many forms, both strictly religious and otherwise (Ober & Strauss 1990; Strauss 1985 [1992]; Morris 1993; Osborne 1994b). Athens simply had more holy-days than any other Greek city, and its centrally directed festivals could serve both as symbols of 'national' unity, no less integral to the city's social structure than Siena's Palio today, and as agents of social cohesion (Goldhill 1990; Giovannini 1991). Conviviality and above all commensality were the order of these extraordinary festival days (Schmitt-Pantel 1990, 1992), the shows being conducted with that theatricality which characterised so much of Athenian public, corporate life (Ober & Strauss 1990; Cartledge 1997). A host of private religious associations, not necessarily meeting only on the major festival days, provided also centres of sociability. Participation in private Dionysiac mystery-cults, for instance, as well as the city-cults of Dionysos arguably tended to promote civic unity in the Athenian *polis* (Seaford 1994). Civic ritual of another sort, finally, is embodied in the largest class of extant classical Athenian inscriptions: the honorific decrees passed by various Athenian public bodies *pour encourager les autres* along the path of public-spirited *philotimia* (Whitehead 1993).

ANCIENT AND MODERN

It would be wrong, however, not to end our brief inventory on a cautionary note of difference. Edward Everett of Massachusetts, speaking before Lincoln at Gettysburg, trumpeted 'the bounds that unite us as one people – a substantial community of origin, language, belief, and law (the four great ties that hold the societies of men together); common national and political interests; a common history; a common pride in a glorious heritage'. Classical Athens was not a nation, but, for those seeking the principle of order and unity that enabled Athens' success as a community, Everett's checklist might seem at first sight a good place from which to start; so it is

⁸ Millett 1991; Seaford 1994; von Reden 1995a; Gill, Postlethwaite & Seaford, forthcoming 1997; cf. for an influential anthropological perspective, Sahlins 1974.

⁹ Millett 1989; Christ 1990; Gabrielsen 1994; cf. on ancient euergetism more generally Veyne 1978.

taken, for example, in a recent critical appraisal of communitarianism and spirited defence of an enlarged liberalism.¹⁰ In practice, however, this move goes only to show that in today's terms Athens would fail to constitute a relevant 'community'. Classical Athens, in Phillips' estimation, scored highly with regard to common history and shared values, widespread political participation, strong bonds of solidarity (civil society, voluntary associations, family, property rights, mitigation rather than elimination of class stratification, sufficient separation of private from public domains). But these admitted successes were achieved only by means, and at the severe cost, of excluding and exploiting women and slaves for the benefit of a small minority of male citizens. No doubt, all closely knit communities almost always breed an opposition of insiders and outsiders, but on these grounds it would be hard to set Athens up as a moral-philosophical standard, let alone as a practicable model for us to imitate (compare and contrast Euben, Wallach & Ober 1994).

Moreover, to end this section appropriately on a note of paradox, Athenian *stasis* (in the modern sense) was significantly premised on *stasis* in the ancient sense of hostile division (especially Loraux 1987, 1991). Doubtless classical Athens was, comparatively speaking, remarkably free from the extreme kind of *stasis* that afflicted so much of the Greek world from the later fifth century onwards (Fuks 1984). Yet the very procedure of democratic voting involved visible division, and the interpersonal tensions normally played out in lawcourt, Assembly and theatre were also normally played out agonistically.¹¹ On two occasions (411 and 404) they exploded into outright and very messy civil war. The ambiguity we raised in *Nomos* (Cartledge, Millett & Todd 1990: 17) – as to whether such personal-political disputes were a 'pathological symptom' or 'necessary to maintain social equilibrium' – may thus be developed here along the following lines: the Athenian democratic community was founded on conflict, and it was because of it – rather than despite it – that Athens achieved a form of order, a new communitarian order of society.

KOSMOS: SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The essays that follow operate at two distinct but intersecting and mutually implicative levels of analysis: that of the evidence (or in some cases the relevant discourse or genre), and that of the facts (both real and imaginary). Broadly speaking, the movement of the papers as editorially sequenced is from amity and harmony through tension to outright enmity,

¹⁰ Phillips 1994. Only the most utopian of liberals, one assumes, would contend that there is no such thing as society.

¹¹ Osborne 1985b; Wilson 1991; Cohen 1995b; on the agonal quality of Greek social life generally cf. Gouldner 1969.

from the good life such as it might have been before the democratic *polis*, by way of the good life as it was or might be in the emergent democratic *polis*, to an examination of violent confrontation within the very symbolic centre of the fully developed Athenian democratic *polis*.

Osborne's archaeologically informed curtain-raiser (see now further Osborne 1996a, *passim*) concentrates fixedly on pots, rather than public art, and on these he claims to find a discourse of personal relationships much closer to that in which everyday personal relations were actually carried out than the idealised discourse of lawcourt speeches and philosophical discussions that forms the evidence of subsequent chapters. Chronologically, he begins his story back in the eighth century but continues it into the classical period on which the book as a whole is focused.

We begin with politics, but in theory rather than practice. **Schofield** avoids the familiar concentration on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and gives his (if it is his) possibly eccentric construction of political friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics* an unusually close inspection. Next, **Foxhall**, taking politics in a more extended, metaphorical sense, conducts a re-examination and suggests a revision of what Aristotle might have called the received and reputable modern view that Greek political friendship was essentially and primarily instrumental and utilitarian rather than emotional and affective (cf. now Konstan 1997).

Religion was at the heart of Athenian democratic identity and civic ideology and was therefore thoroughly politicised; the trial of Socrates is a sufficient testimony and testament of that. But religious interaction in Athenian society at the more local, individual and optional levels within and undergirding the 'national' frame has been considerably less intensively studied. **Arnautoglou's** analysis of these smaller-scale religious associations from a legal and social standpoint reveals how potential conflicts and tensions might be resolved, at least to some extent, into harmonious accommodations between men and women, citizens and non-citizens, free and slave. His chapter offers also by way of a coda an ultimately negative appraisal of the heuristic utility of marginality theory.

The next two contributions focus on games-playing, but as much (or more) in theory or representation as in actual practice. **Fisher** draws on the enormous amount of recent scholarship on the symposium, which in origin was a private and elite, indeed aristocratic institution and could be quite smoothly re-adapted to fulfil subversive, that is anti-democratic, and public functions. But his chief concern is with another traditional kind of aristocratic social practice, that of athletic-gymnastic competition. This too could be used to subserve an anti-democratic agenda, but as Fisher shows, it was also valued highly by the Athenian democratic masses, who sought with some success to adapt and appropriate it to exactly opposite effect, namely the reinforcement of public communal solidarity. However, since this brought new sexual/emotional involvements into play and made some

not insignificant contribution to social mobility, such athleticism functioned also to introduce new social and emotional tensions.

Xenophon is well known, perhaps too well known, as a 'Socratic' philosopher and thus outspoken critic of Athenian democratic politics. It is he who preserves an exceptionally damaging piece of anti-democratic propaganda in the form of a supposed dialogue between Pericles and Alcibiades about the status of Law in a democracy (*Mem.* 1.2.40–46; with Ste. Croix 1981: 414–15). Less well known is the subtlety of Xenophon's critique of democratic sociability and sexuality by way of the witty dialogue he stages elsewhere in the *Memorabilia* between Socrates and Theodote the *hetaira* (though she is never explicitly so called). This is a complex text which, as **Goldhill** unpacks it, can be read to reveal the density of the network of overlapping discourses (art, politics, prostitution, *eros*, philosophy) that constituted Athenian interpersonal relations. Theodote's desirable body thus becomes, through the application of 'postmodernist' theory that problematises the ways in which discourses of society, city, the body and the self can both reinforce and cross-examine one another, the site for a contestable erotics of political consumption.

The note of tension in social practices and values struck in the previous two papers is amplified *crescendo* in the remaining six. The next two papers (by **Rubinstein** and **Rhodes**) and the response to Rhodes (by **Todd**) focus, by way of contrast, on high politics, as played out in the central civic arenas of the democratic *polis*, the Assembly and lawcourts; and they do so chiefly by means of extant forensic orations, that is, the no doubt polished versions of speeches written by professional speechwriters and usually delivered originally by their clients rather than themselves. The emphasis in these three papers falls preponderantly on the tensions in ideology as well as practice that this peculiarly Athenian and democratic mass-elite discourse displays: between the (more or less) public and the (more or less) private, the individual and the collective, and the personal and the communal.

The final three papers introduce a distinctly topographical slant. **Von Reden** draws on the large recent theoretical literature on symbolic topography and geography and applies its findings and indications to the question of how far the geographical space of the Athenian *polis* might have been conceptually rendered into a symbolic space of identity and peace. She finds that the relationship between the city in the narrow sense, the central *astu*, and the (politically equipollent) extra-urban demes was characterised both by tensions and conflicts and by attempts, not always successful, at dissolving and resolving those tensions and conflicts at the communicative level. **Roy** explores in a different way another topographical-political bifurcation, that between the city of Athens and the port of Piraeus, almost a second city. This was a potential source of opposition that was most sharply actualised in 404–3 during the civil war between 'the men of the

City' and the intransigently democratic 'men of the Piraeus'. But that political-ideological division, he finds, was but one expression of the intrinsic structural and symbolic difference of the Piraeus, whether viewed from the military, the political, the economic or the social standpoint.

On the final stage of our voyage through classical Athens **Millett** conducts us back from the periphery to the centre, to the Agora, which was the symbolic as well as the geographical node of the Athenian *polis*, by way – characteristically – of a court case that serves also as a case-study of Athenian civic politico-social enmity enacted within spitting distance of the 'scene of the (alleged) crime'. It would have been good to know whether the outcome of this trial was renewed or even increased communal integration and solidarity or, on the contrary, the exacerbation of the feuding between the principals and their supporters which, on the model proposed by Cohen (1995b), such cases normally and normatively involved. Characteristically, however, we do not know even which side won.

IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION

By classical Greek standards, at any rate, Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries was politically speaking remarkably stable – a case of stasis in the modern sense rather than of *stasis* (civil commotion, even civil war) in the peculiar ancient Greek usage (Finley 1983). Yet Athens was a uniquely large, complex and heterogeneous Greek society, as well as the most radically democratic Greek polity. How therefore was an often dynamic social equilibrium maintained (for the most part)? If our papers tend towards any overall conclusion, it would seem to be to suggest that the secret of Athens' success lay in its multiple forums for, and determined practice of, creative political and social adaptation. The highly pressured tensions between conflicting and often contradictory social groups, forces and ideologies were thus channelled positively – again, for the most part – into progressive and above all solidary outlets, principally through the medium of civic ritual.