

**CA 1 CICERO, *Pro Flacco* 62**

There are men here from Athens, the city which is regarded as having produced humanity, learning, religion, crops, justice and laws, and distributed them throughout the world.

**CA 2 LYSIPPUS, fr. 7**

If you haven't seen Athens, you're a blockhead. If you've seen it and not been captivated, you're an ass. If you're glad to get away from it, you're a pack-ass.

**I. ATTICA**

**(a) NATURAL RESOURCES**

The territory of Attica covers the same area as a medium-sized English County, with a maximum distance of about 50 miles from end to end and from side to side. Much of it is mountainous, and as the rainfall is the lowest of anywhere in Greece only a quarter of it is cultivable. The climate is mild and this permits a long growing season, but the long summer drought allows few main crops to flourish except the hardy olive; the raptures of the Comic writers must be set alongside Thucydides' contention (1.2.3–6) that the very poverty of the Attic soil was responsible for her political stability: it simply wasn't worth fighting over. The wealth of Attica lay in her mineral resources (the silver, the building stone, the potter's clay), her harbour at Piraeus, and above all in the character of her people.

**CA 3 PLATO, *Critias* 110e–111d**

Compelling evidence of the virtue of the soil of ancient Attica is the fact that what remains of it now can vie with any soil in point of fertility in every crop and pasturage for every animal. In olden times apart from its beauty it produced all these things in abundance. How can we justify this claim and the claim that the present soil is a relic of the old? Well, the whole country extends a long way into the sea like a promontory, and the basin of the sea round it is deep close in shore. During the many big floods in the 9000-year period between now and then, the soil which was washed away from the heights did not form any significant deposit of silt, as happened elsewhere, but always flowed away all round into the deep water and disappeared: and there have been left, as in small islands, the bones, as it were, of an ailing body, all the rich and soft earth having been washed away, leaving only the wasted frame of the land. But in the old days when the land was intact its mountains were earth-covered crests and the now rocky plains of Phelleus were covered with rich earth, and there was abundant forest on the mountains, of which there are still clear indications: some of the mountains which nowadays can support only bees not so long ago produced roof timbers for large buildings whose roofs are still sound. And there were many other cultivated trees and boundless pasturage for herds. Furthermore the land used profitably its yearly water supply from Zeus and did not, as now, lose it by its draining off the thin

soil into the sea. Instead it had plenty of soil and took the water into this and stored it in the protecting clay, taking the water which drained off the heights into hollow regions everywhere and so providing a boundless supply for springs and rivers; and the shrines still remaining near old fountains are evidence of the truth of the theory.

**CA 4 XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* 3.5.25**

*(Socrates in conversation with the younger Pericles on the degeneracy of Athens)*

“You see, Pericles, how our country is barricaded by great mountains, which extend into Boeotia and have steep and narrow passes into our country, and how the interior is also circled with steep mountains.”

**CA 5 ARISTOPHANES, *Farmers* (fr. 109, 110)**

109 O Peace, deep in riches, O my pair of oxen, if only I could cease from war, and dig and prune; then bathe and eat my bread and dressed salad, with draughts of new wine.

110 O dear city of Cecrops, native Attica; hail gleaming land, with fine rich soil.

**CA 6 ARISTOPHANES, *Islands* (fr. 387)**

O fool, fool, you've got everything here – a life of ease on your small-holding, free from the bother of the agora, with your very own pair of oxen, where you can hear the sound of bleating flocks, and of the grape-juice as it is pressed out into the vat; where you can feed on finches and thrushes, and not have to queue in the agora for very expensive fish, three days old and well thumbed by the rascally fishmonger.

**CA 7 ARISTOPHANES, *Seasons* (fr. 569. 1–8)**

In the middle of the winter you will see cucumbers, grapes, fruit, garlands of violets, roses, lilies, a blinding storm of blossom. The same man sells thrushes, pears, honeycombs, olives, beestings, haggis, russet figs, cicadas, embryos. You can see baskets snowed under with figs and myrtles. Then they plant gourds at the same time as turnips, so that nobody knows what time of year it is. There is no greater blessing than being able to get what you want all the year round.

**CA 8 SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus at Colonus* 668–719**

668 CHORUS OF OLD MEN OF ATTICA. You have come, friend, to the finest settlement in this land, rich in horses – white Colonus, where the clear-voiced nightingale trills from its haunt in the green shadows of the wood, among the wine-dark ivy and the sunless foliage, rich in berries, inaccessible to any but the god, and sheltered from the storms; where Dionysus ever holds his Bacchic revels with the godly nymphs as companions. And ever a day flourishes in heavenly dew the beauteous

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cluster of the narcissus, ancient crown for the great gods, and the golden gleam of the crocus; and never-resting, never-failing the meandering streams of Cephissus cover with their unpolluted tide the plains of this hilly land, daily speeding the crops' growth. Nor have the Muses' choruses spurned it, nor Aphrodite of the golden reins. There is a plant which flourishes mightily in this land – the like of none that I have heard of in Asia or the great Peloponnese – ever budding, immortal, self-renewing, the despair of enemy weapons, the grey-leafed olive, nurse of the young; no-one whether old or young will lay hands on it to destroy it; for the eye of Zeus, guardian of the sacred olives, and grey-eyed Athena ever watch over them. And further great praise have I to tell of this mother-city, a gift of the great god, greatest pride of this land, pride in horses and foals, pride in its seas. O son of Cronus, lord Poseidon, you brought the land to this glory, introducing the bridle first in these roadways to master the horse. And the oar that fits well in the hand leaps wondrously over the sea, following the fifty dancing Nereids.

**CA 9 ARISTOTLE, *Constitution of Athens* 16.2–6**

2 Pisistratus managed the city's affairs with moderation and more like a constitutional ruler than a tyrant. He was generally kind and lenient and forgiving, and in particular he lent money to the poor for their farming so that they could get a living from the soil. He did this for two reasons, first to keep them scattered in the countryside rather than spend their time in Athens, secondly in order that having a reasonable subsistence and being occupied with their private concerns they should neither wish nor have time to take an interest in politics. He also found his revenues increased by the working of the land, since he took a tithe on all produce. For this reason he also set up boards of judges in the demes and himself often went on tours of inspection in the countryside, settling disputes, to prevent people coming to Athens for settlement and neglecting the land.

6 It was on one such tour they say, that there occurred the episode with the man who was farming the part of Hymettus later called the 'untaxed region'. Pisistratus saw the man digging and trying to cultivate sheer rock, and in his amazement asked his slave to enquire what the region produced.

"Evils and pains of every kind," said the farmer, "and Pisistratus ought to take a tithe of them." He said this without realising who Pisistratus was, but Pisistratus was delighted with his frankness and his hard work and made him exempt from all tax.

**CA 10 XENOPHON, *Poroi (Revenues)* 1.2–8**

2 I was struck by the fact that our country is by nature able to bring in very substantial revenues. To give you proof of this, I will describe the resources of Attica. The produce itself is evidence of the extreme mildness of the climate: crops are obtained from plants which in many other countries are not even able to germinate. The sea around the coasts is also

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4 highly productive – just like the land. What is more, the seasonal produce  
provided by the gods here begins very early and finishes very late. And this  
supremacy is not just limited to annual crops, but to permanent resources  
as well; the land has stone in abundance, from which the finest temples  
and altars are made, and the most beautiful statues for the gods. It is in  
5 great demand among Greeks and foreigners too. There is also land which  
produces nothing when sown, but when quarried can provide for many  
times more than if it grew corn. The silver below the surface is clearly  
providential; for not even a small vein of ore carries on into any of the  
numerous states that border on Attica by land or sea.

6 It would be reasonable for anyone to suppose that this city occupies just  
about the middle of Greece – and indeed of the whole world. For the  
further you go away from it, the greater extremes of heat and cold you  
meet. And if you want to travel from one end of Greece to the other, you  
cannot help going past Athens, on sea or on land, like the centre of a  
7 circle. Furthermore, though she is not in fact surrounded by sea, winds  
from every quarter enable her to import what she needs and export what  
she wants, as if she were an island. For she is between two seas. Likewise  
her position on the mainland makes her a centre for land-borne com-  
8 merce. Most states are troubled by barbarians on their borders; but the  
Athenians have as neighbours states who are themselves very far from any  
barbarians.

**CA 11 XENOPHON, *Poroi (Revenues)* 4.2–3**

2 The silver ore has been mined and quarried for years, but see how large the  
hills of unmined ore still look beside the heaps of waste thrown up by the  
3 workings. In fact the silver-bearing area is evidently not being reduced,  
but continually being extended.

**(b) IMPORTS**

Attica was not self-supporting, and was fortunate to possess in Piraeus the largest and best protected harbour in Greece. This not only provided a base for the war-fleet that kept the Empire together but also attracted commerce from all over the Mediterranean basin. The content of trade was determined largely by the interest of individual merchants, many of them metics, and upon them therefore depended the provisioning of Athens. Certainly the State took steps to encourage and protect essential imports like corn and timber (for which see Old Oligarch 2.11–12, LACTOR 2) and regulated the conduct of trade within the City, but there was no overall state policy for balancing imports against exports, or even for guaranteeing necessary supplies. If there had been, the Spartans might have found it harder to reduce Athens to starvation in 404.

**CA 12 PAUSANIAS 1.1.2**

Piraeus was a settlement from antiquity, but not a port until Themistocles held office at Athens. Phalerum, where the sea is nearest to the city, was their port . . . When Themistocles took office, as Piraeus appeared to him

to project as a more suitable place for shipping, and had three harbours instead of the one at Phalerum, he organised this as their port.

#### CA 13 ISOCRATES 4.42

The city established Piraeus as a trading-centre in the middle of Greece, of such magnitude that individual items which are difficult to obtain from different individual sources can all be provided with ease from there.

*(This observation may well be derived from Thucydides 2.38.2 (Pericles' Funeral Speech)).*

#### CA 14 XENOPHON, *Poroi (Revenues)* 3.1–2

- 1 I will now say something to show that Athens is a very pleasant and profitable place to trade with. In the first place, I suppose, it has the finest and safest accommodation for ships, where those who have run into port
- 2 can ride at anchor without fear in spite of bad weather. Moreover in the majority of states traders are obliged to take away some cargo in return – for they cannot use coinage outside its country of origin; but from Athens merchants may take away in exchange a great many different things which people need, or if they do not wish to take any goods as exchange-cargo, they may do good business in taking silver; for wherever they sell this they always receive a higher price than they gave.

#### CA 15 XENOPHON, *Economicus* 20.27–28

*(Socrates compares Ischomachus' father's love of agriculture with the merchant's love of corn)*

- 27 “Merchants sail to any place where they hear there is a large quantity of
- 28 corn. They cross the Aegean, the Black Sea and the Sicilian sea; then, taking as much as they can, they carry it over the sea, in the same ship as they sail in themselves. And when they need money, they do not unload the corn wherever they happen to be, but take it wherever they hear it is most in demand.”

#### CA 16 DEMOSTHENES 20.31–32

- 31 You are well aware that we eat more imported corn than any other country. Now the total corn we import from all other markets is matched by the corn that comes in from the Black Sea alone. And this is natural, not only because this region is richest in corn, but also because Leucon is in a position there to give special exemption to importers to Athens and to
- 32 decree priority for them in loading. And just look what this means. He charges to others who export from him a duty of one thirtieth. Now Athens takes from him about 400,000 medimni (*an Attic medimnus was about 52 litres, or 1 $\frac{3}{8}$  bushels*) as you can see from the record kept by the Corn Board. So he is in effect giving us 10,000 for every 300,000.

*(Leucon was King of Bosphorus 393–353; in return for his services to Athens, he and his three sons were made Athenian citizens. For earlier Athenian*

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*interest in the corn-trade with the Black Sea, see the Methone Treaty (ML 65 = AE 121))*

**CA 17 DEMOSTHENES 35.50–51**

- 50 You know, gentlemen, how severe the law is if any Athenian carries a cargo of corn to anywhere other than Athens, or lends money for any trading centre other than at Athens . . .
- 51 (*Quotation of Law*) No Athenian or metic living in Athens, nor any of their subordinates, shall lend out money on a ship which is not going to carry corn to Athens.

**CA 18 ARISTOTLE, *Constitution of Athens* 51.3–4**

- 3 There used to be five Corn-Wardens elected by lot, five for the City and five for Piraeus . . . They see to it that unground corn goes on sale in the market for a fair price, then that the millers relate the selling-price of barley-meal to that of the barley, and that the bakers relate the price of bread to that of wheat, and that they use the standard weights, as legally
- 4 determined by the Corn-Wardens. They also elect by lot ten Trade-Superintendents: their job is to supervise the trading centre and to compel merchants to bring into the City two thirds of the corn they import for the Corn Exchange.

**CA 19 XENOPHON, *Poroi (Revenues)* 5.3–4**

- 3 When the city is peaceful, who would not desire it, beginning with ship-owners and traders? Surely those who are rich in corn and wine would do so. And what about those rich in oil and flocks, and those who are able to
- 4 make money by investment, using money intelligently? And indeed craftsmen and sophists and philosophers, and the poets and those who study their works, and the people who are eager for any sacred or profane things which are worth seeing and hearing? Not to mention the men who need to buy and sell a lot of goods quickly – where would they find their requirements better met than at Athens?

## II. SOCIETY

### (a) THE CITIZEN BODY

#### 1. Population (CA 20–21)

There can be no certainty about the total population of 5th.-century Athens, but there is enough information in the sources about the number of citizens (adult males) to give us a reasonable idea. The most detailed information (though still very incomplete) is Thuc.2.13.6–8: at the start of the war in 431 Athens had 13,000 hoplites, and a further 16,000 of the ‘oldest and youngest’ on guard duty, 1200 cavalry and 1600 archers. For further discussion see A.W. Gomme: *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* ad loc., A. H. M. Jones:

*Athenian Democracy* pp. 161–5, and Webster: *Athenian Culture and Society* pp. 39–41.

**CA 20 ARISTOTLE, *Constitution of Athens* 22.7**

In the archonship of Nicomedes (483), when the Maronea mines were discovered, and from the workings there was a surplus of 100 talents for the state, some people proposed that the silver should be distributed to the people (*dēmos*), but Themistocles prevented it.

Herodotus 7.144 says that such a distribution would have given each man 10 drachmas, suggesting a total citizen population of 60,000. But in 5.97 he gives the number as 30,000.

**CA 21 XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* 3.6.14**

*Socrates is discussing with Glaucon problems of statesmanship, including that of keeping the city supplied with corn in an emergency.*

“Our city consists of more than 10,000 homes, and it is difficult to look after so many households at once.”

**2. Class Structure (CA 22–23)**

In spite of political equality Athenian society was not classless. The traditional nobility of the Eupatridae (= well-born) had been superseded in the early 6th century by an aristocracy of wealth. This classification by property had ceased to have much formal importance by the time of Pericles, but even so many writers recognised how much social status was affected by wealth. Euripides *Suppliants* 238–245 (LACTOR 5 ARD 11) speaks of three classes of citizens: the useless rich, the dangerous poor, and the stabilising middle class; and the whole of the Old Oligarch’s argument is based upon an assumption of a class-struggle between the poor majority and the rich minority (see especially 1.2–5, LACTOR 2). These ideas are developed at greater length in Aristotle’s *Politics*.

**CA 22 ARISTOTLE, *Politics* 1279b–1280a**

... The real differentia between democracy and oligarchy is wealth not numbers: wherever government is based on wealth, whether a minority or a majority govern, that is oligarchy: wherever the poor govern, that is democracy. It so happens ... that the rich are few and the poor many.

**CA 23 ARISTOTLE, *Politics* 1295b–1296a**

In all cities there are three divisions – the very wealthy, the very poor and those between. And since it is agreed that the moderate and middle way is the best, it is clear that this rule applies to the ownership of the good things of life. People who are blessed with a moderate amount of these things are the most likely to listen to reason, which is not true of those who are very handsome or very strong or very blue-blooded or very rich, or their opposite, the very poor, the very weak and the completely unprivileged;

the former actuated by arrogance trample on morality on a grand scale, the latter actuated by malice become petty villains. The middle class moreover are the least liable either to dodge office or to seek it excessively, – both attitudes damaging to society. Then the very fortunate in the way of strength, wealth, friends and suchlike, are neither willing to be governed nor understand the process (this starts at home when they are children and their comfortable style of life makes them undisciplined even at school), while those who are excessively deprived of all these things are excessively humble; so the latter do not know how to govern but only how to practise a slavish subservience, while the former do not know how to obey any controlling authority but only how to exert despotic rule. So you get a city of envious slaves and arrogant masters, not of free men. All this is far from friendship and political sharing; for sharing is a mark of friendship. People are unwilling to share even a journey with their enemies. . . .

It is clear that political sharing is most effective when it takes place through the middle class, and the best constitution is possible in cities where the middle class is large and more powerful, preferably than both the other classes, if not, than one, when it can add its support to the weaker party and create a balance and prevent extremes either way. Either extreme is liable to produce tyranny.

1296a It is clear that the middle form of constitution is best. It alone is free from faction, thanks to the large middle element. And thus big cities are more free from faction than small because in small cities a complete split between rich and poor, with no middle element, is more likely to occur. For the same reason democracies are more secure and long-lasting than oligarchies: more people take a larger part in office because of the large middle class. If, without a middle-class, the poor become powerful, the result is speedy disaster.

### 3. Upper and Middle Classes (CA 24–34)

The most general term for designating members of an upper social class at Athens was *kaloikagathoi* (= fine and good men, or gentlemen). Wealth was a necessary criterion for membership (except in unusual cases like Socrates), but not a sufficient one; good breeding was also helpful but not essential. What mattered most was the way a man behaved, what he did with his money, what his interests were, and his attitudes to politics and his fellow men (see G.E.M. de Ste. Croix: *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* pp.371–6). Some action might be merely symbolic, like the wearing of grasshopper hair-clips (Thuc. 1.6.3, Aristophanes *Clouds* 984, CA 325); others were deliberately designed to win prestige for political ends, by conspicuous expenditure on behalf of the state – notably in the case of Nicias, and Alcibiades (Thuc. 6.16. 1–3).

#### CA 24 XENOPHON, *Economicus* 11.9

(Socrates is questioning Ischomachus about the life of a gentleman)

“So you concern yourself with ways of getting rich and having a lot of money so that you have a lot of trouble looking after it.”



“Certainly I concern myself with what you say. What I enjoy is honouring the gods on a generous scale, helping my friends if they need anything, and seeing that the city does not go unadorned for lack of money so far as I can.”

**CA 25 XENOPHON, *Economicus* 2.3–6**

3 “I reckon” said Socrates, “that if I could find a good buyer, my house and all my possessions would fetch 5 minas quite easily; but I haven’t any doubt at all that yours would fetch more than a hundred times as much.”

4 “But in spite of that opinion you claim not to be short of money yourself, and pity me for my poverty.”

“Certainly, for I have got enough to satisfy my wants; but you, with the life-style in which you are involved, and with your public reputation, you wouldn’t have enough even if your possessions were three times their present size.”

5 “Really? How do you make that out?” said Critobulus.

6 “First I see that you have to offer many substantial sacrifices, if you are not to offend both men and gods. Then you are expected to entertain many guests – and lavishly too; then you have to give dinners to other citizens and treat them well, if you are to command any support. And furthermore I see that the state already imposes considerable obligations on you, making you pay for the keeping of horses, the training of choruses and gymnastic teams, and putting you in charge of other operations; what is more, if a war breaks out, I know that they will demand from you trierarchies and capital levies of a size which you will find difficult to manage. And wherever you fail to come up to the mark, I know that the Athenians will punish you as severely as if they had caught you stealing their property.”

(For trierarchies and other public services (“liturgies”), see *LACTOR 5* on *ARD 68*; also *Index* under “liturgy”)

**CA 26 XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* 1.1.16**

Socrates’ conversation was always about human affairs, investigating the nature of piety and impiety, good and bad, justice and injustice, sense and madness, bravery and cowardice, the state and the statesman, government and the governor, and everything else a knowledge of which he reckoned entitled you to call a man a gentleman, and ignorance of which, a mindless automaton (*literally* ‘slavish’).

**CA 27 XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* 1.2.29**

When Socrates saw that Critias was in love with Euthydemus and that he was behaving as if he wanted to gratify his physical urges, he tried to dissuade him, saying that such conduct was servile and unfitting for a gentleman: he was no better than a beggar, making improper requests and

entreaties of his loved one – on whom he was trying also to make a good impression.

*(Paying court to handsome boys was one of the distinctive activities of the upper class. See CA 104ff.; also the numerous ornamental vases inscribed “So-and-so the Beautiful”)*

**CA 28 PLUTARCH, *Nicias* 3.1–2**

- 1 Nicias was inferior (to Pericles) in other gifts, but outstripped him in  
 2 wealth; so he tried to lead the people by this means. Not having the  
 confidence to confront Cleon’s affability and ribaldry which enabled him  
 to manipulate the Athenians at will, he began to win the support of the  
 people by financing dramatic choruses and athletic training and ambitious  
 displays of this sort, outdoing his predecessors and his contemporaries in  
 extravagance and refinement.

In an age when most economic activities were on a very modest scale and profit margins small, it was difficult to make money without having substantial capital to start with. This in itself helps to explain why money-lending was one of the few really profitable businesses. The excerpt that follows is a summary of the finances of Demosthenes’ father. Even though the business is reckoned to be a large one, it can be seen that more capital is tied up in simple cash investment than in the two factories.

**CA 29 DEMOSTHENES 27.9–11**

- 9 The size of the estate is clear even on this evidence. For on fifteen talents  
 the assessment is three talents, and this was the tax agreed. But your  
 knowledge will be even more exact if I give you the estate itself in detail.  
 My father left two workshops, each doing a sizeable business; 32 or 33  
 cutlers worth 5 or 6 minas each, and others worth not less than 3 each  
 from which he received a yearly income of 30 minas nett; and 20 couch-  
 makers given as a pledge for 40 minas, who brought in 12 minas nett. He  
 left about a talent in money, loaned out at 12%, on which the yearly  
 10 interest was more than 7 minas. All this he left as capital bringing a  
 return . . . the sum of the capital being 4 talents 5000 drachmas, and the  
 yearly interest 50 minas. Apart from this, he left the ivory and iron which  
 they worked and the bed-timber, worth about 80 minas; dye and bronze  
 bought for 70 minas; a house worth 3000 drachmas, together with  
 furniture, goblets, gold ornaments and my mother’s dresses in all worth  
 11 about 10,000 drachmas; and 80 minas in cash. So much for what he left in  
 home belongings. Apart from this he had 70 minas lent on bottomry,  
 lodged with Xuthus; 2,400 drachmas banked with Pasion, 600 with  
 Pylades, 1,600 with Demomeles; and loaned to various people in sums of  
 200 or 300 drachmas a total of about a talent. The sum of all these is more  
 than 8 talents 50 minas: and you will find the grand total is around 14  
 talents.

**CA 30 DEMOSTHENES 33.4**

For some time now, gentlemen, I have been engaged in maritime business;  
 for a while I risked sailing in person, but it is now seven years since I gave