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Ancient Athenian Democracy is not an Optimal System

- The *aristae* (optimal) political system is a controversial subject. Many political scientists and politicians have been inspired by the political system of Ancient Athens during its glorious years of the 5th Century BCE. This political system was a historical exception born in 508 BCE; it came of age in 462 BCE, and died in 322 BCE in Ancient Athens.

- The political system of Ancient Athens satisfied concurrently four criteria: *isonomy, isoteleia, isegoria* and *isocracy*. No other historical political system, including the contemporary ones, has ever satisfied all four simultaneously, especially the last two. Nevertheless, *a political system that satisfies all four criteria may not be the best political system*. An alternative system may serve the *politeia* and its citizens much better. Such a system could be a representative political system as it exists today in the so-called advanced countries of North America, Europe, and elsewhere. Such a system might be more efficient, more effective, more transparent and more competitive in solving political problems. The Ancient Athenian Democracy was not!

- However, the political system of Ancient Athens could be implemented more easily today given technological means. What is lacking is the political will. Contemporary political systems are oligarchic, and as such they have a peculiar incentive to perpetuate their power, similar to that of the ancient oligarchic systems, e.g. Ancient Sparta's political system.

- But there are many political systems to choose from. **Aristotle** studied the political systems of his time and distinguished about two hundred different types of organizing "political animals." He even wrote a separate monograph for each one of these systems. Regrettably, only one survived, but, fortunately, this was the most important of all, the *Athenian Politeia*.

- Apart from Aristotle, many well-known historians and philosophers of antiquity wrote about the *Athenian Politeia*, notably **Herodotus**, **Thucydides**, **Xenophon** and **Plato**. Useful information can also be retrieved from others of the time, such as writers of ancient tragedy (e.g. **Euripide**s), comedy play writers (e.g. **Aristophanes**), and rhetoricians (e.g. **Demosthenes**). Furthermore, **Plutarch** of the first-second century CE and **Diogenes Laërtius** of the third century CE provided further information based on non-survived ancient documents, extracts of which are known because of their writings.

- *Most of these ancient writers were very critical, raising strong objections against the political system of Ancient Athens. Their arguments have survived the test of time and are still valid today.*

The Eminence of Ancient Athens Political System

Notwithstanding significant objections, today, as in the past, many consider the Ancient Athens' political system to be, if not an ideal one, the best ever applied. Throughout the history of politics, Ancient Athens' political system has been the subject of extensive research. The scope of these studies can be categorized into three general sub-categories:

(a) Studies of the historical developments that gave rise to this unique political system, including whether Athens was really the first in applying it (actually it was not);

(b) Studies that deal with the nature and characteristics of this extraordinary political system, such as its violent emergency and its inherent instabilities; and

(c) The indisputable effect this system has had in the development of the theory and practice of political developments, not to mention arts and sciences.

Many *pros and cons* have been written about the Ancient Athenian political system, but no theorist or practical politician has ever questioned the premise that **there was no other political system in the history of the world that has had such an immense effect on the development of relevant academic thought and exerted such power on practical politics**. The influence wielded by the Ancient Athenian system on politics has been enormous, with notable examples being the establishment of the English parliamentary system[1], the French Revolution, and the American War of Independence.

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[1] In the 17th Century *the Levellers* in England, a radical political movement, fought for a political system similar to the Ancient Athenian democracy. They failed as eventually did the anti-monarchist. On the other hand, similar voices where echoed during the glorious years of French and American revolutions but remained voices. Their mumbling re-echoes can be still heard today by few ears.

Three Critical Points of View

1. Ancient Athens' political system is distinctive in terms of four criteria. As such, it is exceptional and can be thought of as a unique historical anomaly. It is argued that this system was born and died during the two centuries of Ancient Athens' golden age 2500 years ago. No contemporary political system comes close to the Ancient Athens system of organizing its *politeia* and need not be.

2. Related to the four criteria, contemporary political systems of advanced countries of the world use the same name as the political system of Ancient Athens, usually with an adjective or a possessive noun. However, this is a misnomer because notable dissimilarities and, most importantly, essential logical contradictions (antitheses) exist between the two systems. Dissimilarities are both ***quantitative*** and *qualitative*. As explained below, the qualitative differences are the most important. In other words, the difference is not one of measure (quantity) or degree but one of value (quality) or direction.

3. Fortunately or unfortunately, Pandora's Box is not empty. There is still hope for all those who still genuinely admire the Ancient Athens' political system. Many present-day Prometheus have stolen numerous secrets from the Gods, which can be used to re-engineer the modern political systems using the experimentation of Ancient Athens as a point of reference. Modern Atlases, i.e. politicians like **Solon, Cleisthenes, Ephialtes and Pericles**, are needed to hold the world together on their sturdy shoulders in order to develop a political system that will surpass the Ancient Athens city-state's astounding historical "achievements" of organizing its politeia.

And the Name is Called Democracy

In 431 BCE, **Thucydides**, citing **Pericles**' *Funeral Oration* on the occasion of honoring the first dead of the Peloponnesian War, defined the political system of Ancient Athens as follows:

"… and the name is called **democracy** because not the **few** but the **many** <u>rule</u>"
".… καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς **ὀλίγους** ἀλλ᾽ ἐς **πλείονας** <u>οἰκεῖν</u> **δημοκρατία** κέκληται"

Herodotus writing in 440 BCE was most probably the first to use the term both as a noun and as a verb. The first mentioning of the word democracy is in Book 3 (Thaleia) of his 9-book (muses) history (the word *φυλάς* is translated here with the word clan and not with the word race):

"…from this marriage Cleisthenes was born who established the clans and
democracy in Athens" (Bold emphasis added)
"…τούτων δὲ συνοικησάντων γίνεται Κλεισθένης τε ὁ τὰς φυλὰς καὶ τὴν
δημοκρατίην Ἀθηναίοισι καταστήσας" (Bold emphasis added)

And in Book 6 (Erato), Herodotus states:

"…here I should mention a greatest thing happened not to be believed by Greeks
that Otanes expressed the opinion to the seven that Persia ought to be
democratized. Mardonius abolish the Tyrants of Ionia and established
democracy in the cities" (bold emphasis added).
"…ἐνθαῦτα μέγιστον θῶμα ἐρέω τοῖσι μὴ ἀποδεκομένοισι Ἑλλήνων Περσέων
τοῖσι ἑπτὰ Ὀτάνεα γνώμην ἀποδέξασθαι ὡς χρεὸν εἴη **δημοκρατέεσθαι** Πέρσας·
τοὺς γὰρ τυράννους τῶν Ἰώνων καταπαύσας πάντας ὁ Μαρδόνιος **δημοκρατίας**
κατίστα ἐς τὰς πόλιας. (bold emphasis added).

Pericles' unfortunate definition of Democracy

Two words in Pericles' definition have led to too many misunderstandings: *πλείονας* (many) and *οἰκεῖν* (govern, rule, manage, administer, direct). Democracy exists when <u>all</u> participate to direct (*οἰκεῖν*) the *politeia*. The word *οἰκεῖν* means that <u>all</u> directly (not through representatives) manage their *politeia*, i.e. its economy, its military, its erection of monuments of arts and worship, and its organization of religious, athletic, and educational festivities. In other words, all people govern and there is no need for anybody to govern <u>for</u> the people. Without the <u>all</u>, the many does not define democracy.

In his **Gettysburg Address** (the Funeral Oration of the dead of the American Civil War in 1863), Abraham Lincoln, similar to Pericles' Funeral Oration, stated the famous phrase "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth". Many use this phrase as a praise of democracy. It is not. In a democracy there is no such thing as "for the people". There was nothing "for the people" in Ancient Athens. By definition, democracy was and is the people! Again it should be mentioned that democracy is not necessarily the best of all available alternatives. It is absurd though to call something democracy when it is not.

As it stands in the excerpt of Pericles, the word "many" is unfortunate because it gives rise to two interpretations. The first relates to the ever present political mechanism of majority voting in electing representatives and/or rulers by all eligible citizens, or to decision-making by any political organ, e.g. the parliament. It is a system where elected "representatives" of the people decide and rule on their behalf for a relatively long period of time. This would have been considered contradictory to democracy, not only in Ancient Athens, but also in such oligarchic political systems as that of Ancient Sparta. In Ancient Athens, such a political system of ruling (*οἰκεῖν*) through "representatives" (a government for the people) would have been considered a mockery of democracy. Similarly, there is no such thing as "indirect" democracy. By its own merit, the word democracy means "direct" and there is no such thing as indirectly direct.

The authentic definition of democracy: Participation Makes the Difference

The second interpretation is considered the authentic definition of democracy. If one reads the *Funeral Oration* carefully, he or she will come to the conclusion that Pericles meant that in a democracy all and not many ($\pi\lambda\varepsilon\acute{\iota}o\nu\alpha\varsigma$) must participate in the decision-making process and in governing and ruling (*οἰκεῖν)* their *politeia*. It was in the middle of the 5th Century BCE that, at last, all citizens of Athens could be elected (chosen, drawn) to all offices (archonships) without any exception.

Democracy exists when all citizens participate in deciding every issue relating to the direction and government of their *politeia*. Of course, decisions on every issue are taken by all citizens by majority voting. The word "many" does not mean majority voting for representatives (elected "political animals"), but rather majority voting to decide on specific issues (choosing "inanimate beings") and govern (direct) everyday affairs with the participation of all citizens.

In Ancient Greece, many political systems co-existed. These systems varied from one man's rule (monarchy or tyranny), to a few men's rule (oligarchy), and finally to all men's rule (democracy). In a democracy, all who vote participate in the decision making process and rule without any exception. This is not the case in non-democracies. For example, the representative democracy is an oligarchic political system because many vote but few rule. If some argue that people elect their political representatives, this is not a democracy and nevertheless leaves out too many "representatives" who are not elected, but are appointed by the elected representatives such as the judges and the archons-ministers (government). In a democracy all these should be appointed by all eligible citizens or be selected randomly from a pool of eligible candidates.

The critical concept that is misused is "majority voting." This is a mechanism to make decisions by any political or non-political body, democratic or not democratic. This by itself does not define or determine democracy. A democracy exists, if the majority voting applies only to the **ecclesia of demos** (people's general assembly) with the **participation** of all citizens. The key word is participation and not the decision making mechanism such as the majority voting which existed in oligarchic and monarchic political systems. For example, in Ancient Sparta, as in many other city-states, decisions were taken by majority voting of an oligarchic body of five magistrates (ἔφοροι) or by the council of thirty (28 over sixty years old and the two kings). They were elected by a people's general assembly called Apella and they served for one year only. This did not make Sparta a democracy even though, by today's standards, this would have been considered an ideal "representative" political system.

In Ancient Athens, <u>all</u> citizens participated in deciding and in governing their city-state and this is the (qualitative) difference between democracy and non-democracy. This is the reason why there was no government in Ancient Athens. An ancient Athenian citizen would participate almost on a daily basis as a judge, serving as one of many archons[2], be a member of parliament (*βουλευταί*)[3], and vote many times every year (up to forty) in the *ecclesia of demos*. This made it an authentic democracy because all participated and directed their *politeia*. Aristotle in his *Politics* defines democracy as the system where:

"… all citizens participate"
"… τὸ μετέχειν ἄπαντας τοὺς πολίτας"

Two words are very important in this short phrase: all (*ἄπαντας*) and participate (*μετέχειν*). The word *ἄπαντας* portrays a stronger meaning than the word "all"[4]. A better translation would have been "without exception". The word "participate" has a stronger meaning than voting to elect representatives or "archons". Aristotle, in his *Athenian Politeia*, distinguishes the pre-democracy from the democracy period using as an important criterion the participation. He stated:

"…hardest was and bitterest was the many to work in the politeia; not only these but other things hampered them because it can be said that they had no chance to **participate**". (Bold emphasis added)
"…χαλεπώτατον μὲν οὖν καὶ πικρότατον ἦν τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν κατὰ τὴν πολιτείαν τὸ δουλεύειν• οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐδυσχέραινον• οὐδενὸς γὰρ ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐτύγχανον **μετέχοντες**". (Bold emphasis added)

This passage emphasizes not only the participation but the need to work which Aristotle considered as an obstacle to political participation. This participation is so direct that

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[2]Aristotle in his *Athenian Politeia* makes a historical account of nine archons in Ancient Athens: (a) one king (b) one war archon (*πολέμαρχος*) (c) one eponymous archon and (d) six law record keepers (θεσμοθέται) with roles that differed throughout the political history of Ancient Athens. In the 5th century BCE they were appointed by a drawing (lottery) system for a year. After their term in office, they served as permanent members of *Areios Pagos*.

[3]Parliament had a consultative role to the *ecclesia of demos*.

[4]In English the root of the word *ἄ-παν-τας* is used to emphasize the all in words such as Pan-American, Pan-European, Pan-Asian, Pan-Ethnic, Pan-Slavism etc. In all such cases, the prefix pan (*παν*) is used to show something stronger than the word all.

Aristotle considers citizens who did not take an active stand in a civil strife or war as a reason to take away their civil rights. He continues in his *Athenian Politeia*:

> "… in a city's mutiny not taking a stance with one or the other side is dishonest **not to participate**" (Bold emphasis added)
>
> "…ὃς ἂν στασιαζούσης τῆς πόλεως μὴ θῆται τὰ ὅπλα μηδὲ μεθ᾽ ἑτέρων, ἄτιμον εἶναι καὶ τῆς πόλεως **μὴ μετέχειν**". (Bold emphasis added)

Thus, democracy requires (direct) participation. Voting is only a small part of the democratic process and the mechanism of decision making by majority voting cannot distinguish a democracy from a non-democracy. Such a mechanism of decision making can exist in any political system. How can then a democracy be distinguished from a non-democracy? Alternatively, how can non-democracies measure up to democracy? Four criteria distinguish a democracy from a non-democracy.

Democracy in the Ancient Athenian Drama

Theaters were the mass media of Ancient Athens. Their role was pedagogical, cultural and informative. Many tragedies and comedies were played every year in Ancient Athens, but unfortunately very few survived. From those, however, the value of democracy still can be distilled which was embedded in the Ancient Athenian public opinion. There are numerous excerpts that can be quoted, but a few characteristics were chosen here because they cover the entire period of democracy in Ancient Athens.

Euripides (423) BCE Suppliants

The most cited tragedy relating to democracy is Euripides (423) BCE *Suppliants.* There is an elegant crosstalk between the Cyrix (messenger) from Thebe and Theseus (the mythical King of Athens):

Cyrix: Who is this land's tyrant?
Theseus: First, you have incorrectly started, foreigner, asking here for a tyrant; because this city is not ruled by one man but is free. The demos rules by appointing annually their archons and the rich do not have the most but the poor are equal.

Κήρυξ: τίς γῆς τύραννος;
Θησεύς: πρῶτον μὲν ἤρξω τοῦ λόγου ψευδῶς, ξένε, ζητῶν τύραννον ἐνθάδ᾽· οὐ γὰρ ἄρχεται ἑνὸς πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ᾽ ἐλευθέρα πόλις. δῆμος δ᾽ ἀνάσσει διαδοχαῖσιν ἐν μέρει ἐνιαυσίαισιν, οὐχὶ τῷ πλούτῳ διδοὺς τὸ πλεῖστον ἀλλὰ χὠ πένης ἔχων ἴσον.

This was performed in front of thousands of Athenian citizens in 423 BCE and is well cited. What is not cited is the long monologue by the Cyrix that follows the above passage. The Cyrix states, very persuasively indeed, why democracy is not the best political system; a criticism that is still valid today as explained below.

Aeschylus' tragedy "The Persians" 472 BCE.

The next passage is from Aeschylus' tragedy *"The Persians"*. It refers to a dialogue between Atossa (the Mother of the Persian King Darius) and the chorus (representing the public opinion so to speak) of the tragedy. Atossa wants to know about the Athenians and asks the chorus:

Atossa: Who shepherds them and who leads their army?
Chorus: They claim they are nobody's slaves and servants.

Atossa: How can they put up with invaders?
Chorus: So much so as to destroy thus much and for good the Darius' army.
Ἄτοσσα: τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἔπεστι κἀπιδεσπόζει στρατῷ;
Χορός: οὔτινος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ᾽ ὑπήκοοι.
Ἄτοσσα: πῶς ἂν οὖν μένοιεν ἄνδρας πολεμίους ἐπήλυδας;
Χορός: ὥστε Δαρείου πολύν τε καὶ καλὸν φθεῖραι στρατόν.

This tragedy was performed in 472 BCE with the private financing (*chorêgos*) of Pericles. With this play, Pericles won the first prize at the theatrical competition in Ancient Athens' Dionysian festivity. After 41 years, in 431 BCE, Pericles in his *Funeral Oratio*n will give his own straightforward answer to Atossa:

"We differ also in the military approach as follows. Our city is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing because there is nothing we can hide so that our enemies cannot benefit because we believe, no so much on our military preparations and deceptions, in ourselves and our work to pleasure our soul".
"Διαφέρομεν δὲ καὶ ταῖς τῶν πολεμικῶν μελέταις τῶν ἐναντίων τοῖσδε. τήν τε γὰρ πόλιν κοινὴν παρέχομεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε ξενηλασίαις ἀπείργομέν τινα ἢ μαθήματος ἢ θεάματος, ὃ μὴ κρυφθὲν ἄν τις τῶν πολεμίων ἰδὼν ὠφεληθείη, πιστεύοντες οὐ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς τὸ πλέον καὶ ἀπάταις ἢ τῷ ἀφ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐς τὰ ἔργα εὐψύχῳ·"

Thus, the military superiority of Athens was not so much based on the military preparations, but on believing in themselves, which was reinforced by pleasuring the soul (ἔργα εὐψύχῳ) which can be enjoyed only by free people. Only democracy can have free people. This boosted Athenian citizens' moral and gave them a military advantage.

Aeschylus tragedy *Suppliants* 490 BCE

Much earlier (around 490 BCE), Aeschylus wrote a tragedy, called *Suppliants* as well, which can be considered as an attempt to legitimize democracy before the Athenian public. The story is very relevant today. The girls of Danaos (50 in number) left Egypt through Syria (yes Syria) and came to Greece (the city of Argos) to avoid forced marriage. They left with their own will and not because the city voted to send them away. This is stated in the beginning of the play where the chorus states that the girls did not leave because:

"… the city [did not] decide by vote, but left by ourselves"
"… ψήφῳ πόλεως γνωσθεῖσαν, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτογενεῖ φυξανορίᾳ"

Aeschylus from the beginning sets the play in democracy terms by informing the audience that in Athens and elsewhere decisions were taken by city voting (ψήφῳ πόλεως). Of course, this mythical story of the play had nothing to do with how decisions were taken in the aforementioned countries and cities. Aeschylus continues by having the king of Argos stating that cannot take any decision without asking the people of his city-state Argos (again this was not the true decision making process in any city at the time the story is dated):

"…the decision is not easy; don't ask me to judge. As I said before, nothing can be done without the demos, even if I rule, lest people tell me, if things happen different, 'honoring them you lost your city'".
"… οὐκ εὔκριτον τὸ κρῖμα. μή μ᾽ αἱροῦ κριτήν. εἶπον δὲ καὶ πρίν, οὐκ ἄνευ δήμου τάδε πράξαιμ᾽ ἄν, οὐδέ περ κρατῶν, μὴ καί ποτε εἴπῃ λεώς, εἴ πού τι μὴ τοῖον τύχοι, "ἐπήλυδας τιμῶν ἀπώλεσας πόλιν".

And a few lines below, the father of the girls brings the good news:

"…have elation my children. Good news from the locals.
Demos gave its total vote"
"… θαρσεῖτε παῖδες. εὖ τὰ τῶν ἐγχωρίων·
δήμου δέδοκται παντελῆ ψηφίσματα.

And the king informs us that the vote was unanimous by the *ecclesia of demos*:

"…the city unanimously in one vote resolved"
"…τοία δὲ δημόπρακτος ἐκ πόλεως μία ψῆφος κέκρανται"

The word "*κέκρανται*" in this context means that some discussion took place before a decision was made by the demos. This indicates democracy but it is not mentioned as such. As said above, Herodotus was the first to coin the term democracy.

Democracy was though criticized by many comedy writers which were played before the Athenian public throughout the two centuries of democracy. By the end of democracy years, Menander (342/41–290 BCE) wrote over 100 plays but only one survived in full and a few fragments from others. In one of them, Menander is cited as saying:

"powerful the masses are, but have no mind"
«ἰσχυρόν ὄχλος ἐστιν, οὐκ ἔχει δέ νοῦν»

[12]

Menander does not use the word demos but he uses the word ὄχλος which is translated here as masses. But the most critical comedian of democracy was Aristophanes. In his comedy, Glouds (Nefeles) attacks Socrates and all the others (especially the sophists who were pouring into Athens from all over the known world) who taught the art to persuade the others even if someone was wrong. Logos or freedom of expression (speech) became the tyranny of Ancient Athenian democracy. As the sophist Gorgias[5] (483-375 B.C.E.) put it in his book "*Encomium of Helen"*:

"Logos is a great tyrant, and even though it has a small and invisible body, heavenly works does".
"λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ·"

And a few lines below, Gorgias continues

"… how many, many for many persuaded and persuade by creating a lying word"
"…ὅσοι δὲ ὅσους περὶ ὅσων καὶ ἔπεισαν καὶ πείθουσι δὲ ψευδῆ λόγον πλάσαντες".

Aristophanes The Knights (423 BCE)

In a masterpiece of a comedy, *The Knights* (423 BCE)[6], Aristophanes develops his argument against Socrates philosophical teachings and especially against Sophists and all those who in general use nice words (the logos) to lie for pecuniary benefits. For him, this type of pedagogy will result to an end of the social order especially if this approach is implemented to educate the youth. Unfortunately, this comedy was used to support the verdict against Socrates two decades later. Aristophanes personalizes the fair and the unfair logos and makes them to argue in an eloquent crosstalk:

Unfair Logos: Respond to me, who advocate?
Fair Logos: The fucked up

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[5]Gorgias in his *"Encomium of Helen"* starts with a sentence which summarizes everything about a *politeia*: "A city is decent if it has healthy men, beautiful bodies, wise souls, actions of arete (virtue), true words; the opposite of these are indecent". "Κόσμος πόλει μὲν εὐανδρία, σώματι δὲ κάλλος, ψυχῇ δὲ σοφία, πράγματι δὲ ἀρετή, λόγῳ δὲ ἀλήθεια· τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτων ἀκοσμία".

[6]Actually, the version which survived us is not the one played in 423 BCE because Aristophanes revised it and was re-appeared in 418 BCE. The reason of the revision was that the original version did not win in the competition.

Ἄδικος Λόγος: Φέρε δή μοι φράσον, συνηγοροῦσιν ἐκ τίνων ;
Δίκαιος Λόγος: Ἐξ εὐρυπρώκτων.

Unfair Logos: I am persuaded. And well who write tragedies
Fair Logos: The fucked up.
Ἄδικος Λόγος: Πείθομαι. Τί δαί ; Τραγῳδοῦσ᾽ ἐκ τίνων ;
Δίκαιος Λόγος: Ἐξ εὐρυπρώκτων.

Unfair Logos: Well said. And who speak to demos?
Fair Logos: The fucked up
Ἄδικος Λόγος: Εὖ λέγεις. Δημηγοροῦσι δ᾽ ἐκ τίνων ;
Δίκαιος Λόγος: Ἐξ εὐρυπρώκτων.

Unfair Logos: Do you know what you are talking about? Look around you at the audience and tell me who the many are?
Fair Logos: ok. I Look!
Ἄδικος Λόγος: Ἄρα δῆτ᾽ ἔγνωκας ὡς οὐδὲν λέγεις ; Καὶ τῶν θεατῶν ὁπότεροι πλείους σκόπει.
Δίκαιος Λόγος: Καὶ δὴ σκοπῶ.

Unfair Logos: And what you see?
Fair Logos: Too many of the fucked up, oh my God!
Ἄδικος Λόγος: Τί δῆθ᾽ ὁρᾷς ;
Δίκαιος Λόγος: Πολὺ πλείονας, νὴ τοὺς θεούς, τοὺς εὐρυπρώκτους.

This was written when democracy was at its best in Ancient Athens. It is obvious here that Aristophanes raises serious criticisms against the masses of people who are the audience of his comedy. It states all these in front of them at the theater which had a capacity to seat the entire *ecclesia of demos*. It is no wonder why this play did not win the first prize at the time it was performed. Nevertheless, Aristophanes thought that he can improve it but unfortunately we did not have the original version, i.e. the one that was played before the Athenian audience. Most probably was more critical of masses than the above.

The Four Criteria of Democracy

- Isonomy: Every citizen must be equal before the law. This implies protection from corrupted judges and from rich litigant who hire shrewd lawyers.
- Isoteleia: All citizens should be taxed according to their wealth (property) and income, and receive subsidies and wages in order to be able to participate in the painstaking political process demanded by democracy.
- Isegoria: Freedom to speak only before a political body which decides (votes) for all the issues of the *politeia*, e.g. the *ecclesia of demos*.
  - Isocracy: All citizens must have the same probability to be selected (drawn) as archons through a random process.