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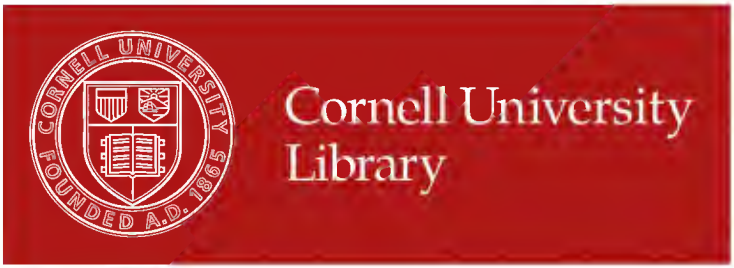

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ARISTOPHANES AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES AT ATHENS

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ARISTOPHANES

AND

THE POLITICAL PARTIES AT ATHENS

BY

MAURICE CROISET

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES LOEB, A.B.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

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THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

My English version of the late Monsieur Paul Decharme's *Euripide et l'esprit de son Théatre* met with so friendly a reception at the hands of both public and press, that I felt encouraged to translate the present excellent work by Monsieur Maurice Croiset, who very courteously gave me permission to do so.

In this volume the attentive reader will find, not only a very scholarly treatment of the difficult question, so often discussed, of Aristophanes' attitude toward the political parties of his time and of the political purpose of his comedies, but also a very vivid account of many of the phases of Athenian life which he has satirized or held up to ridicule.

I cherish the hope that this book will lead some of its readers to refresh their school-day memories of Attica's brilliant comic poet, and others to make the acquaintance, at first hand, or through translation, of one of the most original and entertaining geniuses that ancient culture can boast of.

In rendering the quotations from the plays into English I have made frequent use of Mr. Benjamin Bickley Rogers' masterly metrical translation and of the refreshing notes to Dr. W. W. Merry's edition of the plays.

To my friend and teacher, Professor John Williams White, of Harvard University, I am greatly indebted for generously contributing an introduction to this volume. He has placed me under an additional obligation by making a critical revision of my translation, and I owe him thanks for constant encouragement in the performance of a pleasant task.

JAMES LOEB, A.B.

Münich, *August*, 1909.

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

THE political history of Athenian comedy in the fifth century has yet to be written. Not that the connection of this form of literature with contemporary events has not been fully recognized. All writers of the history of ancient Greece, without exception, have profited by the very varied and interesting information which is scattered through Aristophanes' extant plays and in the fragments of contemporary writers of comedy. Some of them, indeed, have done so with an erudition and an acumen which leave nothing to be desired. From this point of view, Athenian comedy appears to have supplied all the material that one could expect of it, at least for the present. It should be remarked, however, that, in the works to which I have alluded, it has quite naturally been treated as a simple collection of documents. This amounts to saying that, in these works, Athenian comedy is not studied by itself and for its own sake—in its tricks and turns, in its relations to the life of the people, in the personality and special gifts of its writers.

The history of literature, it is true, busies itself with just some of those phases of the investigation which are more or less neglected by political history. It seems to portray the psychology of the writers and of their audience; it shows the development of the various styles and analyses their diverse forms; it notes and discriminates traditions that became fixed as laws, and describes the special characteristics of each mind. These methods, when applied to the political part of Athenian comedy, may lead to its better appreciation. In

fact, they have, in no mean degree, contributed toward making our knowledge of it increasingly sound and exact. But, after all, politics is only a secondary consideration in the study of literature, and has only incidental relation to it.

A proper political history of Athenian comedy should therefore be based both upon general history and upon literary history, and yet be different from either. Its special object should be to study to what extent comedy as a whole, and each poet in particular, was influenced by political events, customs, public opinion and society, considered in its divisions into classes and factions; and, on the other hand, to what extent society, customs and public opinion were influenced by comedy and its authors. It should follow the comic style from year to year, let us witness the composition of each of its great creations, tell us of the suggestions received by the poet, and of his intentions and of his likes and dislikes. It should take us to the theatre and make us onlookers, as it were, at the performances, acquaint us with the impressions gained by the audience, with the intrigues, the verdict of the judges, and finally, it should discuss and explain what may have been the effect of it all. One can readily imagine how greatly such an account would interest a person who cared to become acquainted with the inner workings of political life at Athens during the fifth century.

Unfortunately it must be admitted that such a plan cannot be carried out at this late day. Most of the comic poets of that time are merely names to us. Their works are lost, barring a few titles and fragments, which, in most cases, are not sufficient even to enable us to determine the subjects of the plays to which they belong. The dates of these plays are nearly all unknown. We know practically nothing of the relations of the authors, either among themselves or with their contemporaries. Under such conditions, an attempt at history could be naught else than a tissue of guesswork or a series of avowals of ignorance.

I hardly need say that I have never for a moment dreamed of undertaking it. Aristophanes is really the only one of the comic poets of that period of whom we can speak with due

knowledge, and it is only with him that I have thought it possible to deal. But it is evident that what is said about one poet in particular, may often chance to apply to others of his contemporaries who cultivated the same style. So regarded, this series of essays may serve as a contribution to a history written on a much larger scale, of which an outline has just been given. But it must be understood, at the outset, that it does not claim in itself to constitute even a complete chapter in such a history. We are ignorant of too many important facts about Aristophanes himself. Only eleven of his plays have come down to us; he wrote forty.[1] Of his biography and his personality we know merely what he has told us here and there in his parabases or in the words of his *dramatis personae.* It is with such very insufficient documents that the attempt must be made to answer difficult and necessarily obscure questions.

Those which constitute the real subject of this book bear almost exclusively upon Aristophanes' relations with the political parties that were active at Athens in his day. A rapid perusal of his plays is sufficient to reveal him as an adversary of the men who, at that time, exerted a preponderating influence on the foreign and domestic politics of his country. Does it follow that he was, properly speaking, an enemy of democracy as such, or even of the democracy which existed in the city at that period? It is true that he attacked it when he attacked its leaders? And if he effectively criticised it in some instances at least, what was the meaning of his criticism and from what did it arise? Did he wish to discredit democracy, with a view to bringing about its complete transformation, or simply to warn it, with a view to aiding it in correcting some of its shortcomings? And again, was he, when writing his plays, the interpreter or mouth-piece of an organized opposition that was aware of his views and of the means he employed? Or, on the contrary, did he take counsel of himself only? Such, approximately, are the questions which the

[1] This excludes the four plays which, even in antiquity, were considered apocryphal: Ποίησις, Ναναγός, Νῆσοι, Νίοβος. *Vid.* Kaibel, art. "Aristophanes," 12, in Pauly-Wissowa.

reader will encounter and that I have tried to solve in the following chapters.

These questions, of course, have not been ignored hitherto. Indeed nearly all the scholars, historians, or writers who have occupied themselves with Aristophanes, have made a point of saying what they thought about them. The principal works in which these opinions have been stated or vindicated will be found in the notes to this volume. It is not necessary to quote their titles here. I need hardly say that if these opinions had completely satisfied me, it would not have occurred to me to write another book on the same subject. On the other hand, I am far from considering them as generally incorrect. Truth, in historical and literary studies, gains its full value only through nicety in the differentiation of the facts that reveal it. It is only to the task of better pointing out these differentiations and of arranging them in a better manner that I thought I could profitably devote myself. My conclusions, as will subsequently appear, take issue only with preconceived opinions and unqualified statements.

The first suggestion of this undertaking came with the perusal of the book written some years ago by my lamented comrade and friend Auguste Couat—*Aristophane et l'ancienne Comédie attique.*[1] In this work, which is replete with facts and stimulating ideas, I had met with several opinions, on the subject under discussion, that aroused my serious doubts. Frequent reflection intensified these doubts and led me to write this book. As, in substance, it records a difference of opinion between Couat and myself, I am particularly desirous of minimizing this difference, as far as may be, by here rendering sincere homage to the great value of his work.

October 1905.

[1] Paris, Lecène et Oudin, 1889; second edition, 1903.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH VERSION

ARISTOPHANES is an elusive poet. The main religious convictions of Aeschylus may be determined with certainty from his extant plays; attentive study of the dramas of Euripides reveals his cardinal opinions on politics, society and religion, and his philosophic attitude; but who can affirm with confidence that he has penetrated the comic mask of Aristophanes and knows his beliefs? The poet's mocking irony baffles and perplexes his reader at almost every turn.

"ξυνήκαθ' ὃ λέγει;—μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω 'γὼ μὲν οὔ."

One element of the poet's irony is his apparent frankness. He has at times the air of desiring to be taken seriously and seems to be expressing honest convictions. He is very suggestive and provokes reflection, but the attempt to reduce his opinions to system reveals the illusion. We become uneasily conscious that the great satirist is laughing behind his mask.

A proof of this deceptive quality of the poet's humor is found in the diversity of the opinions that have been held as to his purpose in writing. It was once the fashion among modern interpreters to take him very seriously,—the comic poet disappeared in the reformer. He was eulogized as a moralist and patriot, whose lofty purpose was to instruct his fellow-countrymen; as an earnest thinker, who had reflected deeply on the problems of society and government and had made Comedy simply the vehicle of his reforming ideas; as a wise and discerning counsellor, who was competent to advise the citizens of Athens at a critical time on political questions

and whose judgment of men and measures was sound; as a stern man withal, resolute in the performance of duty, the implacable and victorious foe of all, wherever found, who undermined the glory of Athens. This view, which Grote combated (*History of Greece*, lxvii.), finds vigorous expression in the *Apology* of Robert Browning:

> "Next, whom thrash?
> Only the coarse fool and the clownish knave?
> No! strike malpractice that affects the State,
> The common weal—intriguer or poltroon,
> Venality, corruption, what care I
> If shrewd or witless merely?—so the thing
> Lay sap to aught that made Athenai bright
> And happy, change her customs, lead astray
> Youth or age, play the demagogue at Pnux,
> The sophist in Palaistra, or—what's worst,
> As widest mischief,—from the Theatre
> Preach innovation, bring contempt on oaths,
> Adorn licentiousness, despise the Cult. . . .
> But my soul bade 'Fight!
> Prove arms efficient on real heads and hearts!' . . .
> I wield the Comic weapon rather—hate!
> Hate! honest, earnest and directest hate—
> Warfare wherein I close with enemy. . . .
> Such was my purpose: it succeeds, I say!
> Have we not beaten Kallicratidas,
> Not humbled Sparté? Peace awaits our word.
> Since my previsions,—warranted too well
> By the long war now waged and worn to end—
> Had spared such heritage of misery,
> My after-counsels scarce need fear repulse.
> Athenai, taught prosperity has wings,
> Cages the glad recapture."

Thus vaunts the poet, as Browning interprets him, just after the great victory won at Arginusae. 'Sparta is at our feet, a new day dawns, the War is at an end. For Athens has at length learnt the bitter lesson she might have been spared had she yielded to my pleas for peace.' The actual history of the next twelve months is pathetic. The battle at Arginusae, in which Callicratidas fell, restored the maritime

supremacy of Athens, but peace was not secured. The Spartans made overtures, but the Athenian people, paying small heed to the 'good counsels' that their Poet had given them in the *Acharnians*, the *Peace*, the *Lysistrata*, and in other comedies no longer extant, followed the lead of drunken Cleophon and rejected the Spartan proposals, just as five years before they had committed the grave error of accepting his advice after the Athenian victory at Cyzicus. Sparta bestirred herself, Lysander was sent out, and within a year Athenian arms suffered irretrievable reverse at Aegospotami.

The poet's counsels of peace were rejected. Peace came only with disaster. His 'sage' solutions of many other burning questions were equally ineffective. If Aristophanes was working for reform, as a long line of learned interpreters of the poet have maintained, the result was lamentably disappointing: he succeeded in effecting not a single change. He wings the shafts of his incomparable wit at all the popular leaders of the day—Cleon, Hyperbolus, Peisander, Cleophon, Agyrrhius, in succession, and is reluctant to unstring his bow even when they are dead. But he drove no one of them from power; there is little evidence, indeed, that he damaged their influence or even disturbed their brazen self-confidence. Cleon, when the poet's libellous personal abuse became even in his judgment indecent, promptly brought him to his knees. "When Cleon pressed me hard and tanned my hide, and outsiders laughed to see the sport, I confess"—Aristophanes says in the Wasps—"I played the ape a bit." He adds significantly that he failed to get popular support in this quarrel. The inference is that the people did not think badly of Cleon; but modern opinion of the popular leaders in Athens, formed on the evidence that Aristophanes is supposed to furnish, has been persistently unfavorable, and Cleon's rehabilitation as a sagacious, if turbulent, statesman who consistently maintained the imperial policy of Pericles has been slow.

The poet vehemently protested, it has been said, against the New Education, and viewing the whole intellectual tendency of his time with alarm, pleaded for a restoration of the simple discipline that had moulded the morals and minds and

manners of the hardy men who fought at Marathon. Furthermore, he clearly apprehended the evils inherent in the Athenian system of judicature, which committed the administration of justice to a horde of common men, ignorant of the law, swayed by the impulse of the moment, 'monsters of caprice and injustice,' and ruthlessly exposed the unrighteousness of its proceedings. Finally, reverent of the best traditions of the stage, he stood forth, it is alleged, as their uncompromising defender, and sternly resisted the innovations that were gradually changing the spirit and the form of tragedy during the last third of the century and for a generation relentlessly pursued their chief exponent, concealing an attack that was meant to ruin him under the veil of caricature, parody, burlesque, and satire. But Socrates still frequented, winter and summer, the gymnasia, the market and the schools, and the Sophists continued to discourse and draw their pay; Philocleon, after a single experience of the pleasures of polite society, again foregathered with his cronies before the dawn of day and trudged away to Court; and Euripides, calmly disregarding the malicious strictures of his youthful critic, continued to write tragedy in his own manner and to present on the stage plays that were heard by the young men of Athens with wild acclaim.

This extreme conception of the function of Greek comedy as chiefly censorial and monitory has been modified with larger and more exact knowledge of the times in which the poet lived and of the conditions of life under which he wrote, but it has had unfortunate consequences. These plays have been regarded as a trustworthy source of information in establishing the facts of Greek history, biography, and institutions. So serious an interpretation of a form of literature of which the primary intention must always be entertainment and amusement inevitably obscured the poet's elusive humor. A jest became a statement of fact, a caricature a portrait, a satire a document. The poet's conception, clothed in a fantastical disguise that rivalled the grotesque dress of his own actors, has been essentially misapprehended in an entire play.

On the other hand the mistaken disposition, recently

manifested, to regard Aristophanes simply as a jester and to deny that he had any other purpose than to provoke laughter is an extreme, though natural, reaction. This view denies at the same time, as might have been expected, the cathartic efficacy of Greek tragedy. The highest comedy, typed in the earlier plays of Aristophanes, and in some of the comedies of Molière, is regenerative. The purpose of Aristophanes in the *Acharnians*, in which the action turns upon the impossible and fantastic whimsey of an Athenian farmer securing peace with Sparta for himself and his family alone, is to ridicule the war-party. Nobody would have been more amused than the poet, if he had been told that his play was to stop the fighting, but he did believe that the War was an evil and so far his heart was honestly in his theme; and I have no doubt that many a man who had laughed uproariously at the peace-loving farmer set single-handed in the comedy against a quarrelsome chorus, a powerful general, the whole tribe of sycophants, and the demagogue Cleon in the background, went home from the play less content with the course of his political leaders and longing in his heart for the good, old days of peace. The instrument by which the poet probed the popular discontent was that most effective of all means when skilfully used—a laugh.

To regard Aristophanes as merely a jester is to mistake the man. Ridicule of contemporary persons, that is generally good-natured, or systems or prevailing ideas is his main purpose, I think, in his plays. His praise is for the dead. This ridicule, which ranges from satire to airy conceit, is made humorous by centering it in a far-fetched fantastic conception that is not the less available if it is impossible. Facts are exaggerated or invented with superb nonchalance and bewildering semblance of reality. In these mad revels of unrestrained fancy it is difficult to lay hands upon Aristophanes the man. Nevertheless we do discover probable indications of his attachments and beliefs. He lived in an age of intellectual unrest when many vital questions pressed for solution. That a man of his intelligence did not give them consideration and reach conclusions is impossible.

No doubt he detested a debauchee—let Ariphrades bear witness,—but he must have sympathized with the revolt of the young men of his day against the severe and meagre discipline in which youth were trained during the first half of the century, and must have shared in their eager interest in the new subjects of knowledge. No doubt he deprecated the vicious use of the skill for which Strepsiades clamors in the *Clouds*, but he had too keen a mind to fail to distinguish between the right and the wrong use of this power or to reject all study of the art of persuasion because it might be abused. He was himself a skilful dialectician, as the Debates found in nearly all his comedies prove. He was acquainted with Socrates and must have known that he never misused his wonderful dialectical power and must have felt an expert's special thrill of pleasure in observing with what skill he employed it. Furthermore, the times in which the poet lived were troublous, the fate of Athens again and again stood on the razor's edge. He was not indifferent to the welfare of his country nor of his fellow-countrymen. There is a serious undertone in the *Acharnians* that gives it an indescribable elevation, and in the *Lysistrata*, a Rabelaisian play, written after the disaster to Athenian arms in Sicily in which, Thucydides records, fleet and army utterly perished and of the many who went forth few returned home, there are verses of intensest pathos that betray the poet's poignant sympathy.

"οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνὴρ ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ; μὰ Δί' οὐ δῆτ', εἰφ' ἕτερός τις."

Aristophanes, then, was a man of quick sympathies and settled convictions, although positive expression of belief and feeling is naturally rare in his plays, since he was a writer of comedy. Despite this reticence, it is both interesting and important to determine, so far as this may be done, his opinions on the questions that in his day were pressing for answer, and among these especially his political position. Was he an aristocrat? Was he, in particular, as M. Couat believed, a pamphleteer in the pay of the aristocrats? Or was he a democrat? And if a democrat, how is the satirical

—but extremely comical—characterization of Athenian Demus in the *Knights*, which his countrymen viewed with good-natured amusement, to be interpreted? To these weighty and significant questions M. Croiset makes convincing answer in the book which Mr. Loeb now publishes in an English version.

JOHN WILLIAMS WHITE.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
September 1, 1909.

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INTRODUCTION

I

ATHENIAN comedy was essentially rural in its origin. However great the obscurity of its primitive history, we do at least know that it took form, in the sixth century B.C., in the country districts of Attica.

It had its beginning in the rustic masquerades that travelled from village to village with their songs, during the festivals of Dionysus, the god of wine. Sooner or later, grotesque actors seem to have associated themselves with these choruses, wearing the costume and imitating the indecent buffoonery of the Peloponnesian peasants who had long been representing in dance and pantomime the exuberant life of certain deities of nature. It was from them, perhaps, that comedy adopted also the imitation, in caricature, of real life, which it was not slow to develop in an original manner. At all events the mixture of the most extravagant imagination and the most daring satire was its strength and assured its future.

As long as comedy served merely as a pastime of the peasants, this satire, however free it may have been, had little influence; it did not spread beyond the village, or at most the district. But when it penetrated into those demes half urban, half rustic, which, in the time of Peisistratus and his sons, constituted suburban Athens, and later, when toward ths beginning of the fifth century it was admitted to the festivals of Dionysus that were celebrated in the city proper, and the State gave it a place in the official contests, things

necessarily changed. Thereafter comedy had to take cognizance of the events and of the men who engaged attention in these new surroundings. It retained its fertile imagination and its buffoonery, but it aimed its shafts against people of more importance. At first it did so in what Aristotle calls the "iambic" form: that is to say, by attacking, apparently, persons rather than ideas, as Archilochus had done in earlier days, and without binding itself to the regular development of a dramatic theme. Later on, and bit by bit, it learned the art of construction, and attempted, with increasing success, to invent comic ideas and to exploit them; it constructed regular stories or plots and endowed them with a certain logical quality, and, as a consequence, with a degree of unity. It even ventured on arguments and maintained theses on politics and morals. It is at this stage of its development that comedy appears in the hands of Aristophanes, in the first period of the Peloponnesian war, shortly after 431.

The spirit that pervaded it was naturally that of the majority of its audience. We must therefore try to picture to ourselves the elements of which this majority was constituted, and likewise the relations existing between it and its favorite poets.

Thucydides, in his account of the beginnings of the war in 431, has given us, with his customary precision, a description of the kind of life the greater part of the Athenians led at that time. He informs us that they followed the advice of Pericles and decided to abandon their rural habitations, even to destroy them in part, to convey their flocks and their cattle either into Euboea or to the neighboring islands, and to take refuge themselves, with their wives and children, within the fortified enclosure of Athens. "This change," he adds, "was very painful to them, for the *greater part of the Athenians had been accustomed for generations to live in the country.*"[1] That was, as he points out, an immemorial tradition in Attica, and even the destruction of the earlier political and religious centres, credited to Theseus, had not altered it. From the time that Athens had become the only city, the ancient towns of the district were transformed into hamlets, but habits

[1] Thucydides, ii. cap. xiv.

remained the same. Families continued to reside on their estates, large or small, grouped in domestic communities which rarely shifted their sites. The second Persian war had passed over these country districts like a destructive cyclone, but when the region was again free, the burned or ruined houses were rebuilt and the accustomed life was resumed. "For this reason," says the historian, "it was very hard for them to abandon their dwellings and those local forms of worship which, since the ancient towns had existed, had ever been handed down from father to son; besides, it was a sore trial to them to find themselves obliged to change their manner of life, and it seemed to each one of them as though he were deserting from his native town."[1] This statement is of very great interest, and has not been sufficiently considered in its bearings on comedy. It clearly shows that, during the whole period in which comedy was developing, the greatest part of the Athenian democracy was rural in fact as well as in its way of thinking.[2]

Thus, prior to the Peloponnesian war, the urban democracy really constituted a minority, and this minority was not even absolutely compact. Its most active part consisted of those who lived at the Piraeus.[3] Here were assembled the seafaring folk, and all those who furnished them with what they needed, or who helped them in their various tasks—builders, longshoremen, manufacturers and merchants of every description, pedlars, bankers—a population without traditions, without attachment to the soil, with a considerable admixture of resident aliens (*μέτοικοι*) and in constant contact with foreigners. Life there was necessarily more agitated, more subject to chance, and, in a word, quite untouched by conservative traditions.

[1] Thucydides, ii. c. xvi.

[2] These rural dwellings were naturally much more comfortable than those in the city. There was ample room, and life was agreeable. See, on this subject, Isocrates, *Areopagit.* 52; cf. G. Gilbert, *Beiträge zur inneren Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter des Pelopon. Krieges*, p. 98 *et seq.*, Leipzig, 1877.

[3] Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte*, vol. iii. first part, p. 489.

The city proper, which was rapidly growing larger round about the Acropolis, formed a bridge, as it were, between this turbulent maritime democracy and the peaceful rural democracy. Here a certain number of rich citizens had their city houses in which they resided part of the year. Round about them dwelt a population of moderate means—merchants, business men, owners of factories—who together made up that class so precious to the prosperity of the state, whose praises Euripides has sung in a celebrated passage in his *Suppliants*.[1] But in proportion as Athenian industry had developed, there had grown up, in that large city, a proletariat that lived from hand to mouth on the gains of their daily toil. These earners of small wages were naturally often inclined to espouse the cause of the radicals of the Piraeus. Thus, there were in close proximity to one another two very different elements, which were either counterbalanced, or gained ascendancy in turn, according to circumstances.

To return to the rural democracy—there is no room for doubt that it likewise was very devoted to Athenian institutions. Solon's laws, in the beginning of the sixth century, had enfranchised it and secured it in the quiet possession of its estates. The reign of Peisistratus and of his sons had afforded a long period of domestic peace, and had concentrated in its hands the possession of landed property, and had favored its division into parcels. At the end of the sixth century, Attica probably contained a larger number of small rural estates than any other country in Greece. Cleisthenes' reforms had abolished the old naucraries and had organized the demes, and by so doing had spread the spirit of liberty throughout the rural centres. All these small farmers had become accustomed to deliberate, to reach decisions, to run their own affairs; they were, in the true sense of the word, free men, and they had no desire whatever to cease to be such. Democracy had, without doubt, taken quite as firm a

[1] Euripides, *Suppliants*, l. 244: "Of the three classes of citizens, it is the middle class which ensures the public weal, for it is they who preserve the order established by the state." These words the poet attributes to Theseus, the legendary founder of the Athenian State.

hold on them as on the people of the city or of the Piraeus, but they had a different conception of it.[1]

Quite naturally, they were much more attached to the old customs, to their ancient rites of worship, to tradition in all its forms. They were slow to adopt new ideas, and when they encountered them unexpectedly, they thought them scandalous or ridiculous. The hereditary nobility, which was either hated or eyed with suspicion by the democrats of the city, continued, on the contrary, to enjoy the inborn respect of these peasants. For the representatives of the old families, scattered through the demes, were the guardians and hereditary priests of many of those local cults to which the country folk remained so much attached. Besides, the city politicians had little influence over them. They were kept busy with their work, and had neither time nor inclination to lend an ear to the denunciations that gained credence among the common people of the city, and they held themselves aloof from fruitless agitation.[2]

Euripides, in his *Orestes*, performed in 408, took pleasure in drawing a picture, probably idealized, but surely true in its essential features, of the peasant, as he appeared to his eyes. The countryman, whom he depicts attending a popular assembly, is engaged in defending precisely the cause of hereditary principles against the attacks of a demagogue: "Then another citizen arose; his exterior was rough, but he was a true man. He spent his time neither in the city nor in the rounded market-place; he worked in the fields. He was one of those who assure the welfare of a state. Besides, his mind was open to discussion, when he chose to discuss; an honest man, who led an irreproachable life."[3] This peasant,

[1] Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 821, seems to me to confound the rural democracy quite too much with the oligarchy. The fact that they joined forces under certain circumstances, does not warrant the conclusion that they were, as a rule, animated by the same feelings.

[2] Aristophanes, *Peace*, l. 190. Trygaeus informs us of his name and character in two lines: "Trygaeus of Athmone, a clever vine-dresser, no sycophant, nor fond of meddling in other people's affairs."

[3] Euripides, *Orestes*, l. 917.

the poet tells us, spent his time, neither in the city nor in the agora, which here means the assembly. Here we have, if we properly interpret this precious testimony, the explanation of a fact which is of the greatest importance to our subject. The rural democracy, though numerous, had but little influence in the assembly and in the courts, because the majority did not take part in them. Indeed, this was the evil from which Athens suffered most, and which she was never able to remedy by the organization of a representative government, or by the creation of a *referendum* for certain questions of supreme importance. These dwellers in the villages did not, as a rule, care to abandon their work, to make a long journey and to incur expense, in order to go to the city and make use of their rights of citizenship. Thus it happened that the Athenians in the city and those of the Piraeus found that they made up the majority in the Pnyx as well as in the courts, except perhaps in some special cases.[1]

Of course it was different when there was a question of taking part in the Lenaean or the great Dionysiac festivals. These were considered the most beautiful, the most joyful and the noisiest that were celebrated at Athens.[2] From all the suburbs of the city, and even from distant parts of Attica, people must have come in throngs.[3] These rustic spectators brought with them their habits of mind, their tastes, their ideas, and as, either by themselves or together with that part of the city's population that shared their views, they were

[1] See on this subject G. Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 98 *et seq.*, and J. Beloch, *Die attische Politik seit Perikles*, p. 7 *et seq.*, Leipzig, 1884; cf. Xenophon, *Memor.* vii. § 6.

[2] Aristophanes, *Clouds*, l. 311.

[3] Isocrates, *Areopag.* 52, says, regarding these times: καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν πολιτῶν μηδ' εἰς τὰς ἑορτὰς εἰς ἄστυ καταβαίνειν, ἀλλ' αἱρεῖσθαι μένειν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀγαθοῖς μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν κοινῶν ἀπολαύειν. Of course it is quite clear that *all* the Athenian country folk did not come to join in the urban celebrations of the festivals of Dionysus; *many* of them necessarily stayed at home; but while the orator puts down this fact as a proof that they were comfortably off there, he admits by implication that the attractions of these festivals were felt throughout the whole of Attica, and that a large part of the rural population came to see them.

probably in the majority, they impressed these views on the poets and on the judges.

They adored the tragedies of Aeschylus, who told them of the gods and heroes in noble language; and if, by chance, they did not always exactly grasp his meaning, the sound of the words and the loftiness of the sentiments sufficed to move them profoundly.[1] Sophocles also delighted them; they loved the noble pathos of his dramas, the glowing beauty of his lyric songs, the strength of his characters, and the god invisible, but present, behind the human tragedy.[2] On the other hand, they gave a cold welcome to the writings of Euripides, in which there was too much subtle rhetoric to suit them, and besides a disquieting predominance of uncontrolled impulse that upset the robust simplicity of their morals.

But comedy delighted them even more perhaps than tragedy, because it was their true spokesman. It was the style in which ancient Attica, in its joyous rusticity, found amplest expression. The country, simple and contemptuous, used it to take revenge on the city and on those whom the city admired. To please them, the clever poets caricatured, on the stage, the men of the day—shrewd and selfish politicians, subtle philosophers, full of revolutionary theories, infatuated sophists, fashionable authors, musical composers of the new school, with all their notions,—in a word, all those who were the pets of the city folk, but who appeared prodigiously grotesque to these honest peasants of Athmone or of Chòllidae. The country folk knew no greater pleasure than to overwhelm them with their shouts of revengeful derision.

II

This tacit alliance between the rural democracy and comedy would doubtless appear much more clearly, did we still possess a number of plays that were performed in Athens in the first two-thirds of the fifth century. It is, in fact, quite probable

[1] Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, l. 10; *Clouds*, ll. 1364-1368; cf. *Frogs*, l. 1413.
[2] Aristophanes, *Peace*, l. 531.

that the peasant, who was the original actor and the official choreutes of comedy, must have continued to play an important part in the plays of Chionides and Ecphantides, of Magnes and Cratinus, of Crates and Hermippus. Unfortunately all these plays are lost, and what little we know of them does not lend itself to conjectures of sufficient probability. It is therefore better to limit ourselves to Aristophanes, the only comic poet of whom we can speak with knowledge.

It is impossible, in our day, in view of contradictory and untrustworthy evidence, to determine whether or not he was the son of an Athenian father and an Athenian mother. This was the condition indispensable to bearing the title of citizen, by right of birth. An anonymous biographer does indeed tell us that he belonged to the deme of Cydathenaeon, and was of the tribe Pandionis.[1] This is a definite statement that must be based on official documents, and must therefore be regarded as authentic.[2] But it does not help us decide the question how Aristophanes acquired the rights of citizenship. Was he, as other traditions assert, of alien birth, and were the rights of citizenship conferred upon his father, or upon him, by a decree of naturalization, as one of his biographers affirms?[3] We do not know, and the various theories of modern scholars have not succeeded in harmonizing these divergent views. The same may be said of the poet's relations to Aegina, for the evidence bearing on that question, found in the *Acharnians*, has been variously interpreted.[4] However the matter may have stood, we are

[1] *Biog. anon. Didot*, xi. lines 1 and 3; cf. xv.

[2] Kaibel, art. "Aristophanes," No. 12, p. 971, in Pauly-Wissowa.

[3] *Biogr. anon. Didot*, xi. lines 30-35; cf. xiv.

[4] *Acharnians*, ll. 651-653. Some commentators claim that this passage refers, not to Aristophanes, but to Callistratus, under whose name the play was performed. This seems to me to be inadmissible. The true author was certainly known to the majority of the audience, and it is altogether improbable that Aristophanes should have given to the man, who allowed him to use his name, the rôle and the importance which these verses attribute to him. It is Aristophanes who speaks here, and what he says can only be said about himself. Thus there is reason to believe that Aristophanes had received an allotment of land at Aegina, as a colonist (κληροῦχος), at the

almost sure that, at the time when Aristophanes made his appearance as a comic poet, he was considered an Athenian citizen and was entered on the register of the deme Cydathenaeon.

This deme was one of the subdivisions of Athens, but it is well known that registry in a deme did not imply residence there.[1] Certain indications, found in Aristophanes' own plays, preclude all doubt that, in his childhood at least, he lived much in the country, among the peasants of Attica. His father, Philippus, must have been one of those hard-working, small landowners who, with the help of a few slaves, cultivated their farms, planted with vines and olive-trees, in the environs of Athens. It was men of this class that the poet liked to put upon the stage, under the guise of a Dicaeopolis, a Strepsiades or a Trygaeus; of them he constituted his chorus in the *Peace* and in the *Labourers*. It is evident that, especially in the early part of his life, he had a predilection for them. His comedies are full of allusions to their customs, their work and their pastimes, and these allusions are so concise, so varied, and portray so vividly conditions as they actually were, that they certainly seem to imply a personal knowledge of the things portrayed. One feels that the poet must, from childhood, have seen the peasant in his home, sitting in the inglenook in winter, before his house in summer, near the bubbling brooks and the well, encircled by violets. He is well posted about the ways of the country, the cultivation of the fields and of the gardens—about everything that the husbandman hopes or fears from fair or foul weather.

time of the expulsion of the Aeginetans in 431. His age is not an obstacle, because we neither know exactly how old he was in 431, nor whether law or usage forbade the allotment of land to a minor. As for the legal quibble of Müller-Strübing (*Aristophanes*, p. 607), it seems to me to be quite without value. Aristophanes is joking; it is puerile to discuss his words as one would a legal document. Aristophanes is cited as a κληροῦχος of Aegina by Theogenes in his work περὶ Αἰγίνης (Schol. Plato, *Apologia*, 19 c).

[1] Alcibiades, who belonged to the deme Scambonidae, had his estate in the deme Erchia (Ps. Plato, *Alcib. maj.* p. 123 c). The κληροῦχοι continued to be regarded as members of their deme (Schoemann-Lipsius, *Griech. Alterthümer*, ii. p. 100).

He knows the names of trees, of plants and tools, of the birds that hide in the hedges or that fly over the fields. He also knows the season when the grapes swell and turn golden, earlier or later, according to their variety and to changes of temperature.[1] Not only does he know all these things, but we feel that he has a liking for them and loves to speak of them; he is imbued with a lively appreciation of nature, which is not the dream of a tired city man, but seems to be made up of personal memories and impressions. How can we avoid drawing the conclusion that the future poet must have lived a rustic life at the age when we observe everything, and when those keen impressions are gathered that determine the turn our imagination is to take?

Thus, everything tends to make us believe that this predilection for the rural democracy must have been due, in the first instance, not to study nor to influences met with at the beginning of his career as a poet, but to the very circumstance of his birth. He loved it because he was one of its sons, because he had seen it with his own eyes and felt, in his own heart, all its virtues.

But here we must take note of the fact that this rural democracy never constituted an organized political party in the Athenian state, and that, as a consequence of not having a programme of reform, it could not supply one to the poets who voiced its views. At no time during the fifth century do we see it appoint a leader or take a part in public affairs as a separate and disciplined power. As a rule it held aloof. When it did take action, it was in the nature of support, by offering its co-operation to the factions which, in a given case, best represented its views. But it did so only when there existed urgent reasons to persuade it to shake off its natural indifference.

Aristophanes, like the other comic poets of the time, could, at best, only have borrowed from the rural democracy some vague suggestions, or rather some instinctive tendencies, which he put into preciser formulae of his own accord and on his

[1] *Acharnians*, ll. 32-36, 241-279, 872 *et seq.*; *Clouds*, 43-50; *Peace*, 535-538, 556-600, 1000-1006, 1128-1170; *Birds*, 227-304, 576 *et seq.*

own responsibility. In order properly to appreciate this personal element in his work, we must make a study of his city education and of his relations to the political parties which at that time played a rôle in public life.

III

It was from about 431 to 427, that is to say in the first years of the Peloponnesian war, that he got the special training without which no comic poet of that time could get on.

It was in 427 that he made his first appearance as an author—still a very young man—and his first play appears to have won at least the approbation and encouragement of some good judges.[1] Moreover, it would not even have been admitted to the competition, had it been the work of a wholly inexperienced beginner. Even at this time, then, Aristophanes knew much about his calling; and this proves beyond doubt that, for some time previous, he must have moved in circles in which a man could gain this knowledge.

What circles were these? They were certainly not to be found in the rustic surroundings of which we have been speaking, and among which his childhood was doubtless spent. Comedy had at this time become a very complex work of art, which had its traditional forms and regular devices. Even its flights of imagination were bounded by certain conventions. Besides the versified text, it contained songs, dances, changing scenes, a complete equipment of masks and of stage-settings. However great his genius, Aristophanes could not have become thoroughly acquainted with these observances of his art without associating with people who had the necessary experience, and without apprenticing himself to them.

Now, it is not doubtful that there existed, at this time, regular specialists in comedy: on the one hand, those who were at once poets and actors; on the other, those who were merely actors. Still others were singers, dancers, costumers, impressarios and organizers of shows. In a word, there was a

[1] *Clouds*, l. 528.

whole company of low comedians and Thespians, who mutually supported one another with their varied talents, and through whose unceasing collaboration comedy had, notwithstanding its medley of paradoxes, gradually become the truly harmonious work of art that we still admire in the extant texts. In a town like Athens, these people, who had the same tastes and followed the same profession, must of course have met and known one another, either as friends and collaborators, as teachers and pupils, or as rivals and enemies. Our very scant knowledge of these friendships and enmities is gleaned from a few allusions of Aristophanes, and from the notes of ancient commentators who explained them, often without themselves fully understanding what they meant, and who tried to guess what they did not know. From lack of letters, memoirs and detailed bibliographies, these undercurrents of the literary life of Athens are, as a general rule, beyond our ken. That is no reason why we should underrate the importance which they had in Aristophanes' mental and moral make-up.

This world of comedians was by no means shunned by the best Athenian society—the most open-hearted, most variously constituted and most liberal society that has ever existed.

There is precious evidence on this subject in Xenophon and in Plato. Xenophon's *Symposium* is supposed to have taken place in 421, in the house of the wealthy Callias, son of Hipponicus, that is to say in the house of a member of one of the great and rich Athenian families. In it we meet all sorts of people, rich and poor, philosophers and ignoramuses. Seated at the same table, they converse familiarly; a professional buffoon comes without being invited, but is generously admitted and joins in their conversation. Even a Syracusan mime, called in to give a lewd performance, begins chatting with the banqueters, gives his views on the subject under discussion, and finally is so bold as to make very unfitting pleasantries at Socrates' expense, but is neither thrown out nor even called to order. Here we have equality and liberty carried to a point which it is hard for us to understand.

The *Memorabilia* and the *Oeconomicus* show us the same

customs. In them Socrates talks to whomsoever he chooses, questions, discusses, makes himself heard in all places. His manner of life, as it is there pictured to us, would have been impossible in any other surroundings.

Plato presents the same picture. The Athens that he shows us is a sort of talking place, where everybody is supposed to know everybody else, and where each person has a perfect right to make acquaintance with those he meets. His *Symposium*, in particular, the portrayal of a more or less imaginary reunion held at the house of Agathon in 416, is of quite special interest, because it lets us see Aristophanes himself in an Athenian social gathering. Though, it is true, we do not know the standing of all the guests, we do here discover the same intermixture of classes and professions—and Aristophanes is by no means represented as belonging to an inferior rank.

Thus, we can be sure that he was not at all isolated nor limited to a particular circle, either at the beginning of his career or in later life. From youth on, he certainly lived in Athens, at the centre of intellectual life, enjoying perfect freedom of speech and unhampered exchange of views. This is not the place to enlarge on the influence that city life, with its effervescence and its constant changes, had on his art. No reader of Aristophanes can help feeling, in every page of his plays, what he owed to the streets, the agora, the harbor, to chance encounter and to social gatherings. All that there is of actual life in his comedies hails from there, and even his fancy, in large measure, draws its inspiration thence. But at present we are intent only upon his connection with political parties, and it is from this point of view only that we wish to consider his contact with society in the city.

The Athenians, critical and acute by nature, were bound to discover the hidden meaning of things, to invent novel explanations, to impute secret motives to men who were active in politics. A man acquired a reputation for cleverness and far-sightedness only by outdoing his fellows in matters of this sort. And it was not the avowed enemies of the constitution nor the open adversaries of the popular leaders who took the greatest delight in these insinuations. The oligarchical party,

properly speaking, counted among its members theorists and statesmen, who met doctrine with doctrine and policy with policy. But these personal slanders and invidious explanations did not come from them in particular; they originated in daily gossip at the clubs, without difference of party. It was from this source that a number of accusations sprang that were lodged against Pericles and his friends, and that circulated and gained strength especially from 443 on, when, after the exile of Thucydides, son of Melesias, Pericles was no longer confronted by an organized opposition. At that time people began to say that the statesman obeyed the caprices of Aspasia, even that the fair woman from Miletus wrote his speeches for him. One spoke of Phidias' misappropriation of funds, committed with his knowledge; another held him responsible for the bold theories of Anaxagoras; and when he made war on Sparta, the report was spread that he had done so in order to conceal his fallen fortunes and to escape certain condemnation.[1] True or false, or even true and false at once, we see that this talk passed from mouth to mouth—that it was generally believed, and that, in the end, it had grave consequences.

Comedy in general, and that of Aristophanes in particular, battened on it by preference, but this fact does not warrant our considering comedy as the recognized mouthpiece of an anti-constitutional opposition. Living on satire, it merely repeated, on the stage, what was constantly being said throughout the city. True, by thus repeating this gossip, comedy lent it much added force and authority, so that, in some instances, it imposed it on history. It is the privilege of true works of art to perpetuate whatever they have once held up to our gaze; but the elements which they appropriate and immortalize were originally very far from having the importance imputed to them, later on, on account of these works of art.

[1] Plutarch, *Pericles*, c. xiii. Plutaroh traced these slanders to the comic poets, but he fully understood that they, in turn, had gathered them from daily gossip: *δεξάμενοι δὲ τὸν λόγον οἱ κωμικοὶ πολλὴν ἀσέλγειαν αὐτοῦ κατεσκέδασαν.*

IV

We must not, however, ignore the fact that, when Aristophanes wrote his first comedies, there existed at Athens an oligarchical faction, which detested democracy; that this faction counted among its adherents men who were distinguished in society; that our poet may have known them, have heard them speak and have adopted at least some of their views, and that he may have had friends and patrons among them. There is, therefore, good reason for examining his relations with them as closely as we can at this late date.[1]

The Athenian aristocracy constituted, for a considerable time after the Persian wars, an organized party, of which Cimon, the son of Miltiades, was the principal leader. This party accepted the democracy of Solon and of Cleisthenes, but it brought its own traditions into the management of public affairs, and endeavored to make a conservative policy prevail.

We know how it was defeated by the democratic reforms of Ephialtes and of Pericles, by the curtailing of the powers of the Areopagus and by the exile of Cimon.[2] Notwithstanding all this, it seems to have regained strength in the years following the death of Cimon—between 449 and 443. This was the time of those memorable debates on the rostrum between Pericles, the undisputed leader of the popular party, and Thucydides, the son of Melesias, the chief orator of the opposition, of which Plutarch has preserved us a record. These contests ended, in the year 443-442, in the triumph of Pericles, who secured a sentence of ostracism against his adversary.[3]

[1] Auguste Couat, *Aristophane et l'ancienne Comédie attique*, has sought to prove that the comic poets at Athens were really the clients, if not indeed the parasites, of the aristocracy, who, according to him, held them in a position of complete dependence. It is on this point chiefly that I disagree with him.

[2] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, cc. xxiii.-xxvi.

[3] Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, iv. pp. 407-409.

The aristocratic party was for a long time disorganized by this occurrence.[1] Neither during the last years of Pericles' government, nor even after his death, when the ship of state was guided by men who were greatly his inferiors, did it again succeed in figuring in public debate. Nicias, who sometimes voiced its ideas on the rostrum, was, properly speaking, neither a man of affairs nor a leader. In point of fact, the latent power of the party was then concentrated in a few men, who held aloof and bided their time. The orator Antiphon may be mentioned as the best-known among them.

From time to time there issued from this circle some trenchant pamphlet, in which the party's views were expressed with the somewhat dry rigor which at that time was characteristic of Attic prose. We possess a remarkable example in *The Polity of the Athenians*, erroneously attributed to Xenophon. The author is a haughty and uncompromising aristocrat, who sets out to destroy by his pitiless logic what he considers to be the illusions of the moderate wing of his party. He most emphatically opposes those who assumed that the Athenian democracy could be reformed. With imperturbable calmness, he demonstrates that it merely follows its natural laws, that it is what it ought to be—what force of circumstances demands it should be—and that it cannot be other than it is. This is the hardest, the most inflexible, the most insolent piece of reasoning that has ever been put on paper.[2]

It is very hard to believe that Aristophanes should have been able to gain and to enjoy the intimacy of such people. His playful temper, his exuberant fancy, his droll sallies, could not have suited these theorists, nor was their doctrinaire gravity of a kind to delight this young poet, so full of sparkling and capricious spirit. Furthermore, when one takes the trouble to compare the few ideas, or outlines of ideas, which constitute the entire political doctrine of his plays, with such oligarchical theories as we can in part reconstruct, one

[1] Plutarch, *Pericles*, c. xiv.

[2] We shall revert to this work in greater detail, in connection with the *Knights*, in chapter ii.

soon perceives that these ideas and theories differ considerably from one another. This comparison must be made for each play separately, and must be reinforced by quotations; but the general result may be put down here. Here and there an *indirect* influence, exerted by some of these theories on the thought of our poet, is undoubtedly to be found; but invariably these theories, scattered through his plays, appear very noticeably modified, not only in form—which goes without saying—but even in spirit.

In fact, if, as is likely, Aristophanes held close relations with a number of members of the Athenian aristocracy, it was certainly not with these theorists, and we must by no means imagine him as receiving commands from the leaders of their party, or as their chosen official spokesman. Comedy had nothing to do with plots; and we can unhesitatingly declare that it never joined forces with the revolutionary associations (ἑταιρίαι).

We must not forget, however, that this aristocracy, together with its foremost spirits, or rather under their lead, included a large number of people of very different turn of mind; and foremost among these, many cheerful young men, fond of pleasure and noisy gatherings, and ready to give a warm welcome to those who afforded them entertainment. It was just this youthful company that Aristophanes, himself young, overflowing with gaiety and, no doubt, free in his morals and speech, must chiefly have sought; they are the people he has put on the stage in his *Knights*. Whatever views on politics are expressed in his comedies, are due much more to their conversation than to the theories above referred to. And if these theories are nevertheless to some extent reflected in his plays, it is because these young men, in the course of their heated, ill-regulated and indiscreet talk, cannot have avoided occasionally repeating to one another what they had heard from the serious persons who were their masters and teachers. They repeated these views with the vivaciousness, the paradoxical exaggeration and the extravagant fancies of youth. They derived from them a thousand taunts against the leaders of the people, against the democratic politicians; and this bit

of theory gave support to their hostile gossip and to their satirical personal attacks. It is only fair to assume that they did not sound the depths of these theories, but rather that they delighted in all invidious reports, scandalous stories, and in the whole range of occurrences, true or false, that made their adversaries ridiculous or deserving of hatred. This was the hearth on which the burning flame of comedy found its fuel. It was from this fire, incessantly fanned by Attic wit, that those sparks shot forth plentifully which we still see scintillating in the comedies of Aristophanes.

At the same time, the deduction is not warranted that Aristophanes was the docile mouthpiece of this youthful band. His untrammelled nature rebelled against subserviency, perhaps even more on account of the spontaneity of his imagination and spirit than because of his independence of character. Moreover, the suggestions he received in aristocratic circles were assimilated in his mind with the traditions and instincts of the rural democracy, which was discussed above. We may be sure that from such a process no stable, well-considered and definitive combination can have resulted, but rather an unstable medley, very original and very personal, subject not only to the influence of passing events and of changing moods, but also to that peculiar power of dramatic creations, which occasionally gain the mastery over their own creators and insensibly lead on the poet, just when he seems to be very wisely guiding them.

Did Aristophanes have any patrons at all, in the real sense of the word, among his friends in the best Athenian society? We may as well admit that we know nothing about it, and that, on this point, there is a regrettable blank in our information. In a general way it would seem not at all improbable that the comic poets at Athens should, at the beginning of their career, have tried to secure patronage among the persons who were capable of giving them aid. They may have needed it either to secure a recommendation to the archon who supplied the comic chorus, or in order to guarantee themselves against the disagreeable consequences which too bold a satire was always in danger of bringing upon them. In his young days

Cratinus appears to have sought the patronage of Cimon.[1] Telecleides, at a later time, represented himself as the friend of Nicias.[2] As far as Aristophanes is concerned, there is nothing to indicate that he was the client of any known person, but he may very well have had a patron without our knowing it. The question must be raised, although there is no means to-day of solving it.[3]

V

As opposed to the aristocratic faction, which was vaguely defined and liable to change in its organization, the democracy did not properly constitute a "political party." It was the state itself, the entire body of citizens; but, as we have already said, there existed in this democracy groups with different tendencies and of different character, which, without centralization and without organization, in turn exerted a more or less powerful influence on the public actions of the city.

This state of affairs was favorable to ambitious men who knew how to gain the goodwill of the masses. A regular, organized party presupposes a certain amount of discipline. Now, all discipline holds in check, at least in a measure, the free play of eager individuals who would encroach upon it. But in dealing with a disintegrated and so to speak inorganic throng, anybody, if he possessed clear intelligence, a degree of

[1] Cratinus, *The Archilochians*, fragment 1, Kock.

[2] Telecleides, fragment 41, Kock.

[3] G. Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 74, likewise considers comedy at the time of the Peloponnesian war as the "organ of a party," the party of the great and rich families who kept it under obligations by the fact that they furnished the choruses. It already appears, after what has been said, and it will appear more clearly later on, wherein my point of view differs from his, which is not entirely incorrect, but seems to me to lack the finer distinctions. The learned historian forgets that the leaders of the democratic party, Pericles, for example, and certainly many others as well, had charge of equipping choruses, and yet we cannot put our finger on a line in the comedies that would appear to be favorable to them. Moreover, the choice of the plays rested with the archon, and not with the choregi.

boldness, some power or skill in speech, and few scruples into the bargain, could become a great man in a day. It was merely a question of grasping an opportunity, of striking an unexpected blow, of suddenly securing attention and favor. And Athens, at the time of the Peloponnesian war, became a theatre of action exceptionally suited to politicians.

It was among them that was found the man upon whom Aristophanes, during the first part of his career as a dramatist, made the most incessant war—Cleon, the son of Cleaenetus. He is the best-known of the demagogues of this time. His career furnishes the means by which one may most readily explain and sum up what Aristophanes thought of politicians during the early years of his career.[1]

By birth Cleon belonged to that city democracy whose character we have described above. His father appears to have been successful in business; we are told that he was a tanner, which no doubt means that he had one or more currier's shops, in which slaves worked for his profit. His house, therefore, must necessarily have had commercial relations with some of the principal hide-markets from which the Attic industry secured its supplies—for example, with Cyrene and southern Italy.[2] Manufacturers such as he, consequently, must have had offices and warehouses at the Piraeus, and have lived in touch with the people of the harbor. These are the surroundings in which the young Cleon grew up. Moreover, there is no doubt that he received the education common among young Athenians belonging to families possessed of comfortable means; but his nature seems to have been hard, hasty and imperious, and he was a stranger to that light grace which was characteristic of Attic culture.

According to the testimony of Theopompus, unreliably cited by a scholiast, he desired to serve among the Athenian knights, but met with an unfriendly reception and was perhaps

[1] In Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.*, iii. 2nd part, p. 988, note 3, there is a concise and sufficiently complete resumé of the principal modern articles on Cleon and of the different opinions that have been held about him. However some traits of his character do not seem to me to be distinctly stated.

[2] Hermippus, fragment 63, ll. 4 and 6, Kock.

rejected; at any rate was humiliated by the snubbing of some aristocrat, and from that moment threw his lot in with the popular party, in order to have his revenge.[1] Nothing is more uncertain than this story, in which the malicious interpretation of the opposition is too evident.

We do know that he entered public life toward the end of Pericles' life. At that time he appeared among those who daily harassed and denounced the aged statesman—a bitter and untiring opposition that drew together men of diverse views. As for Cleon, a democrat by birth, he espoused the suspicions, the hatreds and the jealousies of the advanced democracy. Plutarch tells us that, helped by the discontent which at that time was troubling the masses, "he advanced step by step to the possession of power."[2] From 431, the time of the first invasion of Attica by the Peloponnesians under the Spartan king Archidamus, he was one of those who violently attacked Pericles' temporizing policy, and in 430 the poet Hermippus could say that the latter "had been finely bitten by the mad Cleon."[3] In the same year, 430, when the people, in a fit of anger, gave themselves the satisfaction of putting their leader on trial and of sentencing him, Cleon was perhaps one of the accusers.[4] In fact, it was in bringing charges against persons in power that ambitious young men evidenced their zeal for the public good and recommended themselves to the favor of the people.

[1] Schol. *Knights*, 225, 226.

[2] Plutarch, *Pericles*, c. xxxiii., probably based on Ephorus. Perhaps he had already been one of those who accused Anaxagoras, the chief accuser being Thucydides, son of Melesias (Sotion, in *Diogenes Laertius*, ii. 3, 12). The evidence is not very trustworthy, but the arguments against it are weak. Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, iv. § 531, note.

[3] Hermippus, fragment 46, Kock. Cf. Plutarch, *loc. cit.*,

[4] Plutarch, *Pericles*, c. xxxv. according to the testimony of Idomeneus (Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, iv. § 556), regards this testimony as devoid of authority; Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte*, iii. 2nd part, p. 953, note 5, leans to the same opinion. Idomeneus is certainly a doubtful authority; at the same time, his assertion is not in itself improbable. The fact that Theophrastus and Heracleides Pontius name other accusers (see Busolt, *loc. cit.*), does not imply a contradiction.

Pericles' sentence, shortly followed by his death in 429, opened the door to second-rate politicians. Cleon was among those who made a headlong rush for power.[1]

He seems to have been endowed with certain gifts of oratory, and even of statesmanship, which came to the aid of his shortcomings, and not only partly hid the latter from view but occasionally even rendered them agreeable to the people—imperturbable self-assurance, a powerful voice that stirred the masses, effrontery of a kind that scandalized proper folks but did not displease the multitude. His very clamors, his violent gestures, the insults he heaped upon his opponents,—all these traits combined made him different from everybody else. And besides he had a clear head which was clever at simplifying things, a trenchant logic which readily made its way by incontrovertible deductions, and which imposed its conclusions through its systematic severity. Thucydides tells us that he was of a very violent disposition, and that he knew better than anyone else how to persuade the masses.[2] Even his persuasiveness had something violent about it. It sprang from the brutal impulsiveness of his method of arguing, which clung to a few positive ideas and brushed aside a multitude of considerations at which deliberate and reflecting minds halted. He had the actual advantage over his moderate and diplomatic adversaries that falls to the lot of intransigent dogmatists, when they address a public which has no decided views, and is, besides, enamored of ideas that appear to be clear. He understood how to pick out from among the confused views of the masses certain principles which he formu-

[1] The scholiast of Lucian, *Timon*, 30, says of him: ὁ δὲ κλέων δημαγωγὸς ἦν Ἀθηναίων, προστὰς αὐτῶν ἑπτὰ ἔτη. As Cleon died in 422, the period of seven years must have begun in 429. The originator of this surmise must have taken the death of Pericles as his starting-point, and not, as Busolt thinks (*Griechische Geschichte*, 2nd part, p. 998, note 1), the year 428-427, in which Cleon is supposed to have entered the Senate. After a lapse of time Cleon must have appeared as the immediate successor of Pericles, and he may in fact have succeeded him. One should not attach too much importance to the "succession of the three merchants," which has been so meekly accepted on the testimony of Aristophanes (*Knights*, 129).

[2] Thucydides, ii. 36.

lated in imperious terms; and by thus expressing them he gave substance to the prevailing passions, whose servant he made himself in order to rule the state.[1]

In domestic affairs, his policy tended to destroy what little influence the upper classes still retained. Aristotle passes a very expressive judgment on him. He says: "It is he who seems to have done most to corrupt the people by means of their own instincts."[2] This opinion was, no doubt, that of Cleon's adversaries; but we can hardly doubt that, upon the whole, it is a fairly just one. As a matter of fact, the history of this period shows that during this time democracy, as an institution, changed more and more, through the development of the dangerous instincts which it harbored in itself. And as Cleon was at this time the statesman to whom the public lent a more willing ear than to all others, it is certain that he contributed largely to these changes. Moreover, Thucydides says the same thing when he characterizes the politicians who succeeded Pericles: he calls attention to the fact that the latter truly led the people instead of allowing himself to be led by them. "On the contrary," he adds, "as those who came after him had no marked superiority to distinguish them, and yet were anxious to surpass one another, they forced themselves to please the masses and allowed them to manage public affairs."[3] True, this is not said especially of Cleon, but there is no room for doubt that Cleon is the first person aimed at by this trenchant observation. To flatter the democracy by becoming the pander to its instincts, which besides were probably also his own—such was the sum and substance of his policy.[4] We may add to this the incessant accusations in the

[1] These characteristics of a hard and brutal logician seem to me to come out very vividly in the speeches that Thucydides imputes to him in the affair of the Mytileneans. I shall refer to them again.

[2] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, c. xxviii.

[3] Thucydides, ii. 65. 10.

[4] This is what is apparent from the few facts that are definitely known to us. The increase of the judges' salaries, whatever may have been said about it, was not inspired by any other motive (Aristophanes, *Knights*, l. 255; Schol. *Wasps*, l. 88). Remember also the part Cleon played in the negotiations of the year 425 (Thucydides, iv. 22).

courts, by means of which he gained a reputation for vigilance and devotion to the public weal, while at the same time he fostered the suspicions to which the people were only too much inclined.[1]

In foreign affairs, he sought incessantly to arouse the imprudent ambition of Athens. Supremacy at sea, with which Pericles would have had it content, did not suffice for him. Falling in with the secret wishes of the people, and particularly of the inhabitants of Piraeus, he held up before their eyes the glittering vision or the delusive dream of a great empire; and to the discussion of these questions, in which prudence, moderation and a clear recognition of what was possible, would have been necessary, he brought his usual absolutism. He admitted neither compromise nor failure. Thucydides formally declares that, to the end, he remained the chief obstacle to the declaration of peace by the Athenians.[2] "My aim," says the Paphlagonion to Demos in the *Knights*, "is to make you rule over all the Greeks."[3] Even though this utterance be not historic, it at least sums up the policy that Cleon must have professed. The seafarers and all those who made their livelihood at Athens from commerce with foreign parts had, at bottom, the desire and the need of constant expansion, which seems, as though by a law of nature, to be inherent in great maritime powers. Cleon flattered this tendency, just as he was wont to flatter all popular instincts. He declared that this dream could surely be realized, if only they would agree never to yield, and would not allow vain scruples or the plea of humanity to induce them to relax that "imperial" authority, which had been created by the very course of events and by the force of circumstance. He

[1] Aristophanes, *Knights*, l. 256. It seems to me to be of secondary importance whether Cleon acted in good or in bad faith, from self-interest or disinterestedly. History sits in judgment not upon his motives but upon his acts. Those who have sought to vindicate him should have tried to show one occasion at least on which he exerted a beneficial influence on the people. If, on the contrary, he always impelled them to the side to which they secretly inclined, the judgment of Aristotle and that of Thucydides are justified.

[2] Thucydides, v. 16.

[3] Aristophanes, *Knights*, l. 797.

maintained the theory of an ever-growing domination, established and upheld with inflexible energy.

VI

Aristophanes could not but be the avowed enemy of such a man and of those who were like him. He was their enemy by nature, independently of all personal grievances and almost without reflection. They disagreed, in the first place, about essential matters in politics. For reasons which we have already set forth, Aristophanes belonged, heart and soul, to a moderate democracy, which was attached to the soil and to its traditions, was opposed to violence and foolhardiness, had little sympathy with idle talkers, and was very hostile to the incessant lawsuits that upset the city and were advantageous only to the politicians. The ambition for conquest that animated the people of Piraeus was entirely foreign to him. In common with all the country folk, war meant to him defensive war only, limited to the protection of one's territory.[1] To their minds, distant expeditions, in which Athens wasted her blood and her money, appeared as a kind of criminal folly. In a word, every part of Cleon's policy was hateful to them. This was their chief and most serious difference of opinion, which the lively imagination of Aristophanes, the sensitiveness of his poetic nature and his bitter satire constantly provoked and fanned into flame.

Underlying this difference of view there was still another and even deeper element of discord, a conflict less political in its nature than moral and national. The character of the Athenians, such as race, tradition and history had made it, was undergoing a crisis at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war.

Thucydides, in the speech which he attributes to Pericles and which he says the latter made in the winter of the year 431-430, defined this character, while idealizing it. What

[1] Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae*, l. 197; cf. J. Beloch, *Die attische Politik*, pp. 13 and 14.

the statesman praises above all is the charming suavity of Athenian manners, the absence of constraint, the freedom of private life, untroubled by any jealous surveillance, the fair exercise of justice, a taste for simple elegance that lent beauty to life, a confiding hospitality, the amiable grace and ease of intercourse,—in a word, a sort of inborn adaptability, which enabled everyone to realize all his natural gifts, without submitting himself to a severe and trying discipline.[1] All this seems to have been noted at first hand by a close observer, who had lived in various parts of Greece and was thus able to judge by comparison. And even though, in point of fact, these qualities were mingled with faults which the historian himself has mentioned elsewhere, there is, at any rate, no doubt that the picture, viewed as a whole, is faithful. This was, indeed, substantially the character of Athens about 431, and it made Athens the only city of its kind in the Greek world. And now the policy of the demagogues tended to change it seriously. This policy brought with it suspicion, hatred and a factional spirit, and rapidly spread them abroad in the city. By means of the corruption of the judiciary it annoyed and exasperated some people, while among others it engendered a spirit of selfish illwill. By granting excessive powers to the popular assembly, it transformed democracy into despotism; and finally, by its unbounded imperialism, it made the people tyrannical and sometimes cruel.

Nobody was more of an Athenian of the old type than Aristophanes, albeit he was very modern in some respects, and nobody can have felt more keenly than he the existence of this crisis. How could his free and expansive nature, gay and vivacious, fond of merry-making, of a good time and of an easy-going life, have failed to abhor this factional spirit that it saw growing up about it? Demagogues filled with hatred, corrupt courts, a war protracted for the benefit of private interests, and carried on at public expense, was this not enough to outrage so devoted a representative of ancient liberty and one so attached to his peace-loving and kindly Attica? Hence came his disposition to hostile criticism;

[1] Thucydides, ii. cap. xxxvii.-xli.

indeed, one may say that it is entirely traceable to this source. For, at bottom, when he attacks Euripides, Socrates, and even the new style of music with almost as much virulence as he attacks Cleon or Lamachus, the reason for his wrath is doubtless always the same. It is the Athenian temperament, such as he imagines it, as he feels it in his own person, as he sees it in tradition, that he champions, rightly or wrongly, against innovators. More than all others, he loved its lively spontaneity, its inherited straightforwardness, its gracious simplicity and the inborn kindliness that lay hidden behind its mocking ways.

One must keep this constantly in mind in order to get a proper understanding of his relations with political parties. It is quite certain that in the course of the fight in which he engaged, he underwent transient influences, that he sought useful alliances, even that he may have lent himself to certain political schemes. All these questions need be studied and discussed at close range and in connection with each of his plays. But, from the very outset, it is essential to apprehend clearly that, properly speaking, Aristophanes belonged to no party. Child of the country and of Athenian tradition—it is in the name of his native land that he speaks, and it is the soul of Athens that he defends against those whom he regards as its corruptors.

ARISTOPHANES AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES AT ATHENS

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF ARISTOPHANES' CAREER

THE BANQUETERS. THE BABYLONIANS. THE ACHARNIANS

I

In the beginning Aristophanes wrote comedy of a satirical order. Later on he, as well as other comic poets, wrote plays, in which either mythological parody or fancy, pure and simple, predominated. If I am not mistaken, this was a concession that he made to circumstances. His vocation led him, from the very beginning, to pass censure on morals and on politics; and he returned to this practice as often as he could.

Nothing is more likely than that a certain desire for popular success prompted this choice of subject. This style of comedy had a much greater chance of arousing the enthusiasm of the public, which was already somewhat tired of simple buffoonery. Through it an author could quickly gain a reputation for courage and rise to the level of a moralist, nay, almost of a statesman. It was by this means that Cratinus had become *hors de concours*, although imitators and rivals swarmed about him. But ambition alone did not suffice in order to play this part. Evidently it demanded a special aptitude which could not have been developed in a mind that was superficial and indifferent to social questions. We may, therefore, as well

recognize that the youthful Aristophanes possessed a "certain philosophy," and, underlying his playful fancy, more seriousness than would appear at first sight.[1]

The first play he gave to the public was performed in the beginning of the year 427.[2] It was called *The Banqueters* (οἱ Δαιταλῆς). In order to have it accepted by the archon, our poet, who was still unknown, had placed it in the hands of a certain Callistratus, who presented it to the magistrate as his own, and, consequently, took upon himself the responsibility of instructing the actors.[3]

This Callistratus must have been a poet and comic actor himself. The confidence with which he seems to have inspired not only various archons, but also his friend Aristophanes, leaves no room for doubt that, at all events, he possessed, to an unusual degree, aptitude and experience in the usages of the theatre. The archon knew in advance that a play which such a man took up was pretty sure to amuse the public; and that was all that was necessary. As for Aristophanes, we must assume that he had largely profited by Callistratus' counsels in the writing of his play, and that he was still in great need of assistance from him in its actual preparation for performance. This is indeed about what he himself says at a later time in metaphorical language, in the parabasis of his *Knights*.[4]

His comedy was awarded the second prize[5]—in itself a creditable success, and even more than that for a beginner. Its leading idea and a few fragments are all that is known to us of this play.

[1] This is what Plato said of Isocrates: φύσει γάρ ἐνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς διανοίᾳ (*Phaedrus*, p. 279 B). This saying, with its careful shades of meaning and its reservations, seems to me to fit Aristophanes well. Neither the comic poet nor the orator was really a philosopher, but there was in each of them "a certain philosophy," consisting chiefly of perceptions, each in their way incomplete.

[2] *Clouds*, ll. 528-532; Schol. *Clouds*, l. 529; Anonymous author, *De Comoedia* (*Com. graec. fragm.*, Kaibel, i. p. 8).

[3] Anon. *De Com.*, *loc. cit.*

[4] *Knights*, ll. 512-515 and 541-544. Cf. *Wasps*, 1018-1020.

[5] Schol. *Clouds*, l. 529, δεύτερος ἐκρίθη.

Taken as a whole, it was a satire on the new customs. The poet placed upon the stage an Athenian of the old days, a man fond of tradition, very much attached to the past—and together with him, two young men, his sons. The one submitted willingly to paternal discipline; the other was full of new ideas, a votary and follower of the sophists, a fine talker, a sycophant and a debauchee. The moral interest of the play arose from the contrast between the two brothers. This is what Aristophanes himself points out, when, in the parabasis of the *Clouds*, he makes allusion to this first attempt of his Muse, and reminds the audience of the day "when his two characters, the good young man and the debauchee were well received" by them.[1] The details of the plot are entirely unknown to us. From the title of the play itself, and from rather obscure evidence, the conclusion seems warranted that the chorus was made up of a religious brotherhood, who met to offer a sacrifice to Heracles and then to feast at a banquet in his honor.[2] What part did they take in the dialogue? There is nothing to indicate it. The most important fragments bring before us either the father and his sons or the two brothers. In one passage the youthful innovator uses words that are in fashion, in which his father immediately recognizes the mark of certain popular rhetoricians and demagogues, or that of Alcibiades, the leader of the gilded youth (fragm. 198, Kaibel). Elsewhere, the same "bad lot" shows that he has neglected the study of Homer and that he knows nothing of the national poets, such as Alcaeus and Anacreon, but that he is past master of sharp practice (fragm. 222 and 223). He knows how to play the lyre and is proud of it, but it is clear that the music he cares for is of the popular kind (fragm. 221). What did the old Athenian gentleman do to reform this scamp? He seems to have intended to send him out to the country to dig (fragm. 221). We do not know whether he

[1] *Clouds*, l. 528.

[2] *Comic. graec. fragm.*, Kock, i. p. 438. Suidas: Δαιταλεῖς· δαιτυμόνες καὶ θιασῶται καὶ συμπόται καὶ οἷον συνδαιταλεῖς· οὕτως Ἀριστοφάνης. Orion, 49. 10: Δαιταλεῖς, δρᾶμα Ἀριστοφάνους· ἐπειδὴ ἐν ἱερῷ Ἡρακλέους δειπνοῦντες καὶ ἀναστάντες χοροὶ ἐγένοντο.

succeeded. Certain fragments give us a glimpse of a law-suit, real or fictitious (fragm. 210, 216, 217, 218, 219). In another passage the father probably called upon the ancient kings of Athens, Erechtheus and Aegeus, as witnesses (fragm. 211). This enumeration must be incomplete, for he could not have failed to summon to his aid also the popular king Theseus, who was inseparable from the other two. From all this we gather nothing definite about composition and general plan.

We do, however, see quite plainly that the play was much more than a mere collection of gibes at individuals. It was controlled by a consistent thought, which served to bind together its various parts. This thought was a censure, undoubtedly a moral one, and probably, at least to some extent, a political one.

The character of the old Athenian, of whom we get rather vague glimpses, was in itself a living profession of faith. The very essence of his nature was attachment to the old-time manner of living and thinking. Whatever his rôle in the play may have been, and even granting that he suffered many rebuffs, we may be sure, at any rate, that the poet allowed his own sympathy for him to be felt, and that he sought to gain for him that of the audience. On the other hand, there is no indication that this person manifested any leaning toward oligarchy. As far as we can judge, it was the intriguing and the laziness of the youths of his day that he abhorred above all things. Such other reproaches as he could heap upon them, sprang from that source. As a consequence, he must have loved the country, and he firmly believed in its value as an educator and maker for good morals; it was for this reason that he wished to force his son to work as a peasant. He must also have loved the old religious cults—the subject-matter of the play itself seems to make this clear—and we may picture to ourselves this good fellow, in the midst of his companions in the worship of Heracles, making common cause with them of his devoutness and of his protests against the spirit of innovation. In a word, it is easy to think of him as a somewhat less rustic Strepsiades with this or that distinguishing peculiarity, about which it would be over-bold to make conjectures at this late day.

The virtuous son is merely a shadow, and it seems impossible, taking into account the state of the fragments, to form any idea of his personality. It is even somewhat difficult to conceive that he should have played an important part in the comedy, for, at best, he could not have been other than his father's double, and a very mediocre double at that. Aristophanes, who was so intelligent in matters relating to the theatre, must instinctively have felt what a bore reasonable and reasoning young men are on the comic stage. When, in speaking of his play, he summed it up in the contrast between the two brothers, he no doubt alluded more to an isolated scene (fragm. 199), or to the underlying scheme of the composition, than to its dramatic form.

We cannot doubt, on the other hand, that the "bad young man" was the main attraction of the play. It would not have been amusing without him. His deep-rooted dislike of discipline was its mainspring. Whatever the plot may have been, it was assuredly he who kept it moving. From sheer necessity Aristophanes had given him that exuberance of life, that kind of bold confidence and unrestrainable activity, which we shall meet with again in his Dicaeopolis, Cleon, Strepsiades, Trygaeus, Pisthetairos, Lysistrata, and generally in those of his characters who are the authors of a comic enterprise. Moreover, this fellow was typical of young Athens; of course he represented it in an exaggerated form and with the extravagance that was indispensable in this style of composition. It seems that the poet, by hints let fall here and there, must in some sort have reviewed the young man's life hitherto. From the time that he grew up his father, who was probably astounded at his talents, had apprenticed him to learned masters, with the intention of assuring him a brilliant future. "But," said he, "he learned none of those things that I wanted him to learn. Instead of doing so, he learned how to drink, to sing in topsy-turvy manner, to love nothing but Syracusan cookery, the pleasures of the Sybarites and bumpers of Chian wine from Laconian cups" (fr. 216). Notwithstanding all this, he had, as we have already seen, become initiated in rhetoric and in sharp practice (fr. 198, 222). Once

equipped with these means of attaining success, he had become a sycophant, a public denunciator, and had grown rich on threats and calumny (fr. 219, 225). At the same time he had acquired, in one fell swoop, all the vices of that profession. He was a gambler, a toper, a debauchee, an impudent fellow (fr. 202, 205, 206, 209, 213). He boasted of all this, and treated his own father with cynical insolence (fr. 198).

Incomplete as these portrayals are, they do nevertheless enable us to determine approximately the drift of the Aristophanic satire. It was against the professional politicians that the poet inveighed, and by this term we mean those who at that time were beginning to transform politics into a lucrative trade in Athens. But he directed his attacks neither against their views nor against their way of conducting affairs, nor even against that exploitation of the courts of justice which they had organized for their own profit; all that was to come in due time. For the moment, it was their moral perverseness that he placed on the boards. He showed it in a concrete example, in living guise, as a composite of a group of tendencies which seemed to him to be about to corrupt the character of the Athenians. It was no business of his to seek for what was cause or effect in this group of tendencies. Probably he did not even, in the secrecy of his heart, ask himself whether this rapid growth of unscrupulous ambition and selfish individualism was a result, say, of the constitution of Athens itself, or of the way in which it was carried into effect. The temperament of the poet made him more susceptible to what can be seen than to things that must be guessed at, and he was content to embody the existing evils in his fictions. He did so with remarkable power from the very beginning of his career.

In so doing he did not act as an adherent of a party, and he had to wait on no man's word of command. The men whom he took to task, belonged rather to the middle, or to the well-to-do class, than, strictly speaking, to the people. Sons of country landowners, sprung from families that were attached to the soil, they exploited the new teaching and the democratic radicalism and made both alike serve their passions.

t was a real service to the democracy to chastise them, and y showing it the canker from which it suffered, to invite it to urify itself.

II

The *Banqueters* was followed, in 426, by the *Babylonians*, erformed at the city festival of Dionysus.[1] It is not very kely that any of the undated plays was performed between hese two comedies. It was quite enough for a beginner to ave had one of his works accepted each year.

Though this second comedy is likewise lost, we have omewhat more information about it. It was a political atire of a much bitterer, much bolder and far more personal ind than the first play. Success had heightened the young oet's confidence as well as his literary ambition. He ardently esired to distinguish himself by a brilliant success, and besides his, certain occurrences in the year 427 appear to have greatly ncreased his dissatisfaction as well as that of a good part of he Athenian populace. Let us review them briefly.

During the year 428-427 Athens was profoundly agitated y the Lesbian revolt and by the consequences that grew rom it.[2]

Mytilene, one of the most important states of the maritime eague, had openly withdrawn, and had formed an alliance with he Lacedaemonians. This defection was peculiarly grave in itself, ut was even more so because it might have become the signal or an uprising of all the oppressed and discontented allies. Athens gave proof of its determination and energy. Mytilene vas blockaded, reduced to starvation and forced to sue for nercy, before the Peloponnesian fleet could come to her aid. After her subjugation was accomplished, it became necessary to lecide upon her punishment. In this connection the question f the policy to be pursued towards the allies was raised and assionately debated in the popular assembly. Should a reign

[1] *Acharnians*, l. 503, and scholia.

[2] For a detailed account of what happened, see Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. nd part, p. 1002 *et seq.*

of terror be inaugurated? Or did wisdom and humanity alike enjoin moderation? Thucydides has, in his usual manner, given us a sort of abridged and ideal account of the discussion that took place at this juncture;[1] he does not describe in detail the passionate changes of opinions. Two consecutive meetings of the assembly were held. On the first day the advocates of unmerciful severity carried all before them: notwithstanding the energetic opposition of a certain Diodotus, son of Eucrates,[2] Cleon's proposal was adopted, and it was decided to put to death all the Mytileneans who were old enough to bear arms, and to sell the women and children as slaves. Subsequently, in the course of the evening, and during the night, a moral reaction set in. People thought about the horror of such a slaughter—a more humane view prevailed. The Mytilenean envoys, who were then in Athens, took advantage of this disposition, and urged their friends to plead with the magistrates. The latter called a second assembly on the following day, and asked for a fresh discussion. In it, Cleon and Diodotus supported the same views as on the previous day, but this time it was Diodotus who prevailed, though his majority was small. One thousand of the Mytileneans who were most heavily implicated were put to death,[3] the rest were ejected from the best part of their land for the benefit of Athenian colonists.[4]

Cleon's attitude in this crisis was the same as usual. His imperious and violent temperament instinctively sought the simplest solution, though it was the most brutal and the most inhuman. Thucydides, who reproduces the spirit, if not the form, of the speeches he made at this time, has brought out their character in bold relief. In them we see a hard-hearted man of narrow and biassed intelligence, who converts politics into a sort of rigid, imperious and inflexible mathematics. He sets up the thesis that the sovereignty of Athens over her

[1] Thucydides, iii. c. xxxvi. *et seq.* [2] Thucydides, iii. cc. xxxvi. and xli.

[3] Even this number has been questioned; several scholars think there is an error in the text of Thucydides (Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.*, iii. 2nd part, p. 1030); but their arguments are far from conclusive.

[4] Thucydides, iii. 50.

llies is a "tyranny,"—that is, an absolute and arbitrary ›ower; and this sovereignty must be maintained by means hat fit tyrannies—that is, by terror and force. His whole ›olicy is contained in this syllogism; and this rampant dema-;ogue is well aware that it is contrary to the very spirit of lemocracy. But this contradiction, instead of checking him, lrives him to increase his harsh demands, for it might, unless are were taken, place his system in jeopardy. He therefore .dvises the democracy to be distrustful of itself, that is, n this instance, of justice, of humanity;—and, since it is in act a tyranny, so far as its allies are concerned, he demands hat it act according to the rule of tyrannies. Such is the ›ssence of his speech; the rest of it merely aimed at accentuating he aggravating circumstances that were charged against the Mytileneans.

Diodotus' reply presents this furious radicalism in even a ›learer light by refuting it. Diodotus does not meet Cleon's ›rguments with considerations of humanity, but of politics. ›n contrast to Cleon's uncompromising and abstract logic, he ›olds up to view the complexity of real life. In substance he ›ays, "Cleon reduces everything to force, which amounts to an ›dmission that fear alone has complete power over mankind. Now, this is not the case. Many other feelings sway them, orce them into action and frequently make them overcome ear itself, be it that they scorn danger, or that they hope to ›scape from it. Politics is the art of reckoning with these eelings, and its essence is compromise. By nature it is ›pposed to extreme measures, which permit of no other out-ome for revolt than despair."

There can be no doubt that these ideas, in their essential ›arts, were actually expressed on the platform in these two nemorable assemblies. Not only is the good faith of Thucy-lides a guarantee of this, but it may be said that they were n the natural order of things. Without this conflict of pinions, without this combat between two opposite theories, he two successive votes of the Athenian Assembly would not ›e intelligible.

If, on that day, these ideas were expressed with special

forcefulness, it was because the crisis demanded it; but they most certainly had been in people's minds for a long time, because they must, of necessity, have been engendered by the very situation of Athens as regards her allies. There can be no doubt that, even outside of the Assembly, they were matter for discussion in the clubs, and that they agitated Athenian society.

It is inconceivable that these ideas should not have taken a new lease of life at the close of the summer of 427 as a consequence of these impassioned and much-talked-of discussions. The better part of Athenian society, the most intelligent, discreet and humane part, could not help subjecting its conscience to a somewhat distressing examination. Had not this rebellion of Mytilene, this unuttered but universal discontent, that was so pregnant with future unrest,—had it not been provoked? Had not the allies been treated with a severity that could not fail to drive them into open revolt? Their contributions had been increased, they had been forced to bring their lawsuits to Athens, they had been deprived of all power, they had been reduced to a state of subjection. And even if all this was a necessity from the point of view of a majority of the Athenians, sagacious and moderate men were certainly convinced that the burden might have been made less heavy. Instead of doing so, the politicians of the day made it heavier through their severity. When the people fixed the amount of the contributions, it was the politicians who proposed and discussed it; besides, rightly or wrongly, they were accused of exacting money from the parties in interest and of crushing those who refused to buy them off. Again, it was the politicians who appeared as accusers before the courts, in suits brought against the leading men of the allied cities, and people did not shrink from saying that they drove bargains with the fear that they inspired and that they grew rich on threats. Probably this sort of talk was sometimes true and often false. But such truth as there was in it sufficed to make people who were already restless and discontented accept it without question. And so it finally came about that the entire responsibility for a state of affairs that

vas attributable to them in part, but in part only, was placed ıpon the leaders of the people, and especially upon Cleon.

But was Diodotus the mouthpiece of the oligarchical opposiion at this juncture? We have really no reason to think his, but quite the contrary. Thucydides does not say a single vord that would warrant us in suspecting it, and nowhere else n the history of the period do we again find this man engaged n factional intrigue. Cleon himself makes no allusion whatever to anything of the kind in the speeches that the historian ıttributes to him. The contest which Thucydides describes is ɔurely a struggle between two moral tendencies, the one more ıumane, the other more severe, but both independent of party. If we may trust his adversary, Diodotus would appear to be ı man who wished to oppose a subtle policy to a necessary ɔolicy, not in the interests of a faction, but in order to increase ıis own prestige.[1] The question suggests itself whether his ather, Eucrates, is identical with the demagogue and hemplealer of whom Aristophanes made fun in the *Knights*?[2] This s not at all impossible or improbable.[3] In any event, there s absolutely no authority for connecting him with the aristoracy. Indeed, it is more likely that the view which was upported by the majority in the affair of Mytilene was oligarchical neither in its origin nor in its development. It nay be that it brought together some of the oligarchs because hey detested Cleon, but, in fact, it was really Athenian, and t is the Athenian character that deserves credit for it.[4]

Let us now picture to ourselves Aristophanes, young poet s he was at this time, in the midst of this society and in he uproar of these discussions. His play was ready in the eginning of 426, and must have been written at the close of 427—that is under the immediate influence of the events of vhich we have just spoken. In those days of political comedy

[1] Thucydides, iii. 37. [2] *Knights*, ll. 129, 254.

[3] Modern scholars, for reasons that are not clear to me, as a rule reject this lentification (Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 807, note 4). All ıat one can say is that there were several men named Eucrates at Athens at ıat time.

[4] Thucydides, iii. 34. 4 and 37. 2.

the great concern of the competitors for the prize was to put their finger upon the topic of the day. There was, in fact, always, or nearly always, a topic that arose from actual occurrences, and which was to be found latent in the minds of all. The difficulty lay in seizing upon it, in disengaging it and in giving it shape. Quite often it happened that several poets seized upon it at the same time; and this is not surprising when we consider that these poets lived in identical surroundings and got their inspirations from identical sources. Naturally each one of them, in working up the topic in dramatic form, gave his own version of it by inventing a comical fancy that was his own. We do not know what comedies competed with Aristophanes' play, either at the Lenaean festival of 426 or at the Great Dionysia of that year. It is not improbable that the question of the allies served as a theme for several competitors; it certainly was the topic indicated or suggested by what was uppermost in people's minds.

At all events, whether others dealt with it or not, Aristophanes seems to have made it his very own by treating it in a way that was bold to the point of being scandalous. The *Banqueters* touched only indirectly upon politics. In the *Babylonians* he handled it openly, and, from the very start, his temerity outdid that of men like Cratinus, Hermippus and Telecleides, who had already gained a reputation in this style of composition.

III

Unfortunately our knowledge of this play is very meagre; but the little that we do know is not without literary interest or historical value.

The first evidence to be noted is that given by the poet himself. In the parabasis of the *Acharnians* he boasts of the service he rendered the people by his comedy of the preceding year, and by this he means the *Babylonians*. He says that he taught them to distrust the hollow flattery of strangers, and not to be deceived by "envoys from the states," and that

nally he showed them "how democracy is practised in the ;ates," καὶ τοὺς δήμους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν δείξας πῶς δημοκρα-οῦνται (*Acharn.* l. 642). "Moreover," he adds, "the allies are ll anxious to know this worthy poet, who has dared to tell ıe Athenians the truth openly." Elsewhere he reminds us ıat, as a consequence of this declaration, he was charged with having ridiculed the Republic and derided the people."[1] hese various bits of information give at least a general out-ne of the play. In the first place, we learn from them that ;s subject was the oppression of the allies and the tyranny to 'hich they were subjected under the guise of democracy. The oet had dared to speak of justice and had pleaded the cause f humanity.[2] Furthermore, we see that he had introduced nvoys who fooled the Athenian people by means of flattery nd falsehoods.

A second authority amplifies this statement. An ancient ommentator tells us that in this same play Aristophanes made fun of the magistrates, of those chosen by lot as well s those who were elected, and of Cleon also."[3] The only lected magistrates to whom this can possibly have referred, 'ere, first the generals (στρατηγοί) who were constantly ealing with the allies, and next those prefects or governors 'hom Athens sent with the title of ἄρχοντες into the cities nder its sway.[4] As for officials chosen by lot, this designa-.on may refer to members of the Athenian Senate, or to the ıdges who constituted the courts, or perhaps to the Archon 'olemarchus, who was especially entrusted with jurisdiction ver foreigners.

[1] *Acharnians*, l. 631.

[2] *Peace*, ll. 759, 760: τοιοῦτον ἰδὼν τέρας (Cleon) οὐ κατέδεισ', ἀλλ ὑπὲρ ;ῶν πολεμίζων ἀντεῖχον ἀεὶ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων νήσων. This play was aimed against leon, in the interests of Athens and of the islands.

[3] Schol. *Acharnians*, l. 378.

[4] On this subject consult Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ıd edition, No. 54, note 5, and No. 23, where he shows that the creation of ese archons appears to antedate the Peloponnesian war. There seems to be) doubt that these officials were elected, because Aeschines (i. 107) accuses marchus of having "purchased" a position of this kind "for thirty minae." was evidently a case of corrupting voters.

Wherein did the comical idea on which the plot of the play was based consist? On this point, we must admit, there is hardly anything but uncertainty and guesswork.

The title, it is true, indicates with almost complete certainty that the chorus was composed of "Babylonians."[1] Of these Babylonians we know, moreover, that they were forced to tread the mill; therefore they were slaves, and supposed to be of barbarian origin.[2] It has been surmised that these slaves represented the allies.[3] There is absolutely nothing to justify this supposition, which would have precluded all dramatic action. For, if the allies had been so represented from the very beginning of the play, one fails to see what worse fate could subsequently have befallen them. All that it is safe to conclude from this account of the chorus is that the scene of the play probably was a mill. This being settled, we can imagine, from what has been said above, what its essential features must have been. Apparently this mill was supposed to represent the Athenian Republic, and as the play was directed against Cleon, there is reason to believe that Cleon was represented as being the manager, who ran the mill for the people. The allies may have appeared as farmers, who were obliged to bring a part of their produce to their master, under control of the manager and his appointed agents. Here was a good chance to show up the manager as a sort of tyrant, who robbed his master, besides demanding money from the farmers and exacting the hardest terms from them.

It is not easy, it is true, to see how a plot of this kind could have admitted envoys, nor what business the god Dionysus pursued by sycophants had in it, to whom reference

[1] H. Schrader, *Über den Chor in Aristophanes Babyloniern*, *Philologus*, vol. xlii., 1884.

[2] Hesychius, Σαμίων ὁ δῆμος and Βαβυλώνιοι. Cf. Suidas, Βαβυλώνιοι. Fritzsche (*De Babyloniis Aristophanis Commentatio*, p. 17) refuses to believe that a comic chorus could have been composed of slaves. But do we not know that a large number of tragic choruses represented slaves? Why should the same not have been the case in comedy? Cf. fragments 64, 66, 79, 88 and 97 of the *Babylonians* in the *Comic. att. fragm.* i. of Kock.

[3] H. Schrader, *loco citat.* p. 580. Gilbert already held this opinion, *Beiträge*, p. 148.

made in two fragments.[1] But it must not be forgotten that ıcient comedy was essentially fanciful in its conceits, and ıat its episodes frequently bore little or no relation to the ain subject. Had the *Acharnians* or the *Knights* been lost, ıd if we merely knew that the former play represented an thenian peasant who had made a treaty of peace for himself one, or that the latter play placed the house of Demus and ıe rivalries of his servants upon the stage, two things would ə hard for us to understand. First, how it was possible, in ıe *Acharnians*, to see Euripides at home, surrounded by his ıst-off tragic garments; and, secondly, how, in the *Knights*, ıe poet had managed to introduce the account of a debate ɛfore the Senate. In compositions of this kind severe logic ıs no place. It is enough that the hypothesis as to the plot the *Babylonians* just suggested seems to fit in best with the ɛneral facts of which we have knowledge. We need not ɛek to guess how the plot was developed from scene to scene, or what inconsistencies it contained.

It is true that some scholars have thought that Aristophanes ludes to a scene of his *Babylonians* in a passage in the *charnians*, which was performed in the year following. ɨicaeopolis there speaks of the joy he felt "a year ago" hen he saw Cleon "disgorge the five talents," and he adds ıat he loves the Knights for this good deed.[2] According to rather too ingenious critic, this passage recalled a scene in ıe *Babylonians*, in which Cleon, hard-pressed by the Knights, ɛtually and *coram publico*, vomited five talents that he had rung from the allies.[3] I think this interpretation is abso-ıtely inadmissible. Not only is it difficult to imagine such a ɛene, but this interpretation also assumes that the Knights

[1] Fragm. 70 and 71, Kock. So far as the envoys are concerned, there is ıthing to prevent our assuming that the trembling farmers came to beseech e manager to procure them a reduction of their dues, and that, in order to cceed, they indulged in the basest of flattery. Neither of the fragments stifies the opinion according to which these envoys were a parody on the ıbassy of Gorgias in behalf of Leontini (Bergk, Ranke, Gilbert). And yet is not wholly inadmissible.

[2] *Acharnians*, ll. 5-8.

[3] Van Leeuwen, *Acharnians*, The Hague, 1901, note to v. 6.

were given an important part in it, of whom no mention is anywhere made; and if the Knights had played this part in the *Babylonians*, it is rather surprising that not a word should be said about this in the *Knights*. Now, quite to the contrary, the parabasis of the latter play seems to indicate clearly that the poet's friendly relations with the young aristocrats were at that time quite recent, and had not previously existed. The allusion in the *Acharnians* must therefore be to another occurrence, which I shall try to explain later.

Though there are various ways of conceiving the part given to Cleon in the play, neither the fact that he had a part nor its importance is to be doubted. So much is certain. On this point the testimony of the scholiast quoted above is confirmed by that of Aristophanes in the *Peace*.[1] The influence that Cleon exerted at this time, first acquired in the affair of the Mytileneans, must have made a profound impression on the youthful poet. From this time on, he began to regard him as the man who instigated and was responsible for all the evils from which the Athenian democracy appeared to be suffering. Or rather, with his vivid imagination, Aristophanes saw in him the personification of these evils, and presently arrived at the very sincere conviction that, by overthrowing the one, he could remove the other.

The play was performed at the Great Dionysia, as we have said. This was the time when the allies brought their annual tribute to Athens, and they did not fail to attend the celebrations of the season.[2] We can understand with what feelings they welcomed this virulent satire on their oppressors. We do not know positively how Aristophanes, or rather Callistratus, who lent his name to the play, ranked in the competition, but it appears certain that, had he received a prize, he would not have failed to boast of it later on. It is, therefore, most probable that he was awarded neither a first nor a second prize. This was not for lack of support given to his play by a large and influential party; without it, however great his courage, the poet would not have dared to run the

[1] *Peace*, ll. 759-760.

[2] *Acharnians*, ll. 643-644, and scholia to l. 377.

isk to which he exposed himself. Such a comedy was possible nly where a certain consensus of public opinion backed it up.)oubtless it owed its existence to the majority that had sup- orted Diodotus in the affair of the Mytileneans. On that ay a powerful sentiment had manifested itself, and the poet, ncouraged by the circles in which he moved, thought to find n them a bulwark upon which he could count. Perhaps he ad not been entirely mistaken. There is every reason to elieve that, on the day of the competition, he was vigorously upported in the theatre by his friends, by a considerable art of the audience, especially by the country-folk, who were ostile to the demagogues, and finally by the strangers who ere present. On the other hand, how could such a satire on he Republic have failed to call forth violent protests, not- ithstanding the buffoonery in which the poet had been areful to clothe it? Without doubt, his chief attack was irected against Cleon; it was at his door that he laid all the orrors of the policy that he condemned, but, in substance, his policy had been approved by the people, and it was hardly voidable that they should feel somewhat offended.

This was enough to induce Cleon to believe that he could et his aggressor punished. Everything led him to make the ttempt: his own interest, in the first place, and then his uite natural resentment. He could not have been indifferent o the rebuff he had received in the affair of the Mytileneans. t that juncture he had encountered an unforeseen opposition, hich was not accidental but systematic, for it sprang from a olicy opposed to his own. And therein lay cause for anxiety. ow Aristophanes' comedy proved to him that this opposition as seeking to organize, that it was growing bolder and that it imed at spreading. It had to be checked by vigorous measures. oreover, in this instance, considerations of state seemed to all in with his personal interests. While the policy pursued gainst the allies could be freely discussed in the assembly of he people, was it not culpable leniency to allow accusations to e brought against it in their very presence? And was not he man who thus denounced the oppression practised by thens, in the presence of the very people who were being

oppressed and at the risk of forcing them into open rebellion —was he not acting like a disloyal citizen?

These considerations decided Cleon; he resolved to avenge the Republic and to revenge himself.

IV

Just how did he go about it? The best way to discover this seems to be to turn to Aristophanes' own testimony.

In the *Acharnians*[1] Dicaeopolis says: "I have not forgotten what I suffered at Cleon's hands for last year's comedy. He dragged me before the Senate, and there he made outrageous charges against me, overwhelmed me with calumnies, came down roaring on me like a torrent and lathered[2] me in such a way that I almost perished in that unsavory affair."

Farther on[3] the same person adds: "To-day, at least, Cleon will not be able to say that I insult the Republic in the presence of strangers, for we are just among ourselves at the Lenaea, and the strangers have not yet arrived."

These two passages, taken together, seem to be of a kind to inform us quite accurately of what took place. But at the very outset a difficulty presents itself, about which the commentators hold various views. Dicaeopolis, who says these things, quits his rôle for a moment and speaks in the name of the poet. Who is the poet? Is it Callistratus, who lent Aristophanes his name? Is it Aristophanes himself?

Several scholars think that the defendant must have been Callistratus; they call attention to the fact that the play was regarded as his, that he had accepted responsibility for it when he brought it out as his own in the competition, and that, in all probability, the great mass of the public did not know the name of its real author. Others again are of the

[1] *Acharnians*, l. 377 *et seq.*

[2] For "came down roaring on me like a torrent" and for "lathered" I am indebted to Mr. W. W. Merry's note to verse 381. I have repeatedly borrowed from that editor's excellent English versions. [Translator.]

[3] *Acharnians*, l. 502 *et seq.*

opinion that, in a case like this, the secret was an open one, that Aristophanes was certainly known as the author of the *Acharnians* as soon as the play was performed, and that he had likewise been known as the author of the *Babylonians* in the preceding year; so, they contend, he was the person with whom Cleon had to deal directly.[1] This second opinion seems to me to be correct, but it calls for some explanation.

Aristophanes borrowed the names of others, for a certain number of his plays at least, during the greater part of his life. It appears that his reasons for doing this were not always the same; but it would be a hard task to discover them, and here we have to deal only with his first plays. Now, as far as these are concerned, he has himself given a very concise explanation of his motives in the parabasis of the *Knights*—the first comedy he brought out under his own name, in 424. In speaking of the *Banqueters*, he says, in allegorical language, that, as he was at that time still too young to acknowledge his child, he had abandoned it, and that somebody else had taken it up. He adds that, if he has not yet produced anything under his own name—and this, of course, applies also to the *Babylonians*—it is because he knew the exacting taste of the Athenians and also how hard a task it was to write a successful comedy. So he had preferred to serve his apprenticeship as a rower, before taking the helm of the ship himself.[2] It appears at once that none of these reasons implies the existence of any secret.

If he thought himself "too young," he, no doubt, meant too young to brave the decision of the archon, whose duty it was to make a choice among the competitors, and to allow only three of them to produce their plays. We can readily understand that this official, who had to arrange the celebration of the feast, and was responsible for its success, would not be much inclined to take up a beginner, who was still a very young man. But as soon as the beginner's play was offered by

[1] Kaibel, art. "Aristophanes," No. 12, Pauly-Wissowa, pp. 973-974, by whom the principal earlier writings on this subject are mentioned. Cf. Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1060, note 1.

[2] *Knights*, l. 512 *et seq.*

a well-known poet, who made himself responsible for it and who consented to offer his name as guarantee, it immediately became a different matter. The archon was quite indifferent to questions of literary ownership, and cared very little about knowing who the real author was; the less so, as collaboration seems to have been quite frequent in the writing of comedies. The name of Callistratus was in itself a guarantee, and that was all that he required.

When once Aristophanes had officially transferred the ownership of his work to the man who lent it his name, there was no reason whatever to make a secret of the true facts, especially when the play had already been accepted. The other motive he mentions occasioned just as little need for doing so. The apprenticeship of which he speaks seems to refer chiefly to the technical part of his task. Evidently considerable experience in the usages of the theatre was necessary in order to stage a comedy after the fashion of the day. A young man, lacking both authority and experience, even if endowed with the most undoubted dramatic talent, would not be equal to the task of devising the costumes and the masks, of arranging the stage setting, regulating the entries and the exits, the action and pantomime of the actors, and, above all, the dances and songs of the chorus—in a word, of instructing this whole array of artists, exacting their obedience, and making them subordinate themselves to a single interpretation of the play. In all this difficult and fatiguing business Aristophanes must needs have given Callistratus precedence; but evidently that does not imply that he was not present at the rehearsals, or that he hid behind the scenes during their progress. It is even likely that he himself acted in his plays, and it has been surmised, not without probability, that he must personally have taken the part of Dicaeopolis, who spoke in his name. Even if this was not the case, it must, at any rate, be admitted that he took part in the preparations for the performance, and that as a consequence he could not have failed to be known as the real author to the whole theatrical company, such as the actors, the members of the chorus, the supernumeraries and the slaves employed on the stage.

Surely it is hard to believe that all these people would have kept the secret.

It is clear too that this secret was kept even less carefully in the clubs of Athens. It is a strange misconception to imagine that a comic poet of that day, and especially that Aristophanes, wrote his plays after the fashion of Euripides, at home, in his study and without telling anybody a word about them. Nay, the comedies themselves seem to reveal to us that they had their first origin in merry gatherings, at which it was the fashion to joke, to make fun of people, and to invent all sorts of nonsense. Of course they were not written in such surroundings; but many a scene must have been sketched in this way, among friends, as one idea suggested another. Even if the political plays, such as the *Babylonians* and the *Knights*, were not, properly speaking, conceived at these gatherings, they were certainly tried there, and perhaps read aloud and applauded before their performance. And he who read them was of course the poet, a born pamphleteer, who found there, and there alone, the surroundings which he needed for the production of his masterpieces. Indeed, does he not make this clear himself when, in his *Knights*, he tells us[1] that many people had long been surprised that he had not yet produced anything under his own name, and that they were urging him to compete openly? Who were these people, if not his companions? And how would this idea have occurred to them if the young poet had not been known as the author of the plays that he had entrusted to Callistratus?

This being the case, we cannot doubt that Cleon made a direct attack on his real adversary. The evidence which the ancient commentators collected does not give us any more precise information about these attacks than do the above cited passages from Aristophanes' own writings. One of them, however, adds that Cleon brought a suit impugning the genuineness of the poet's citizenship.[2] If this is correct, it is clear that there is at least a confusion of dates in this statement. This second suit cannot be contemporaneous with the first, that is, earlier than the *Acharnians*, for in the passages of

[1] *Knights*, l. 512.

[2] Schol. *Acharnians*, l. 377.

that play in which Aristophanes alludes so explicitly to his troubles with Cleon, there is not a word bearing on this matter. In point of fact, this suit was brought, not only after the performance of the *Acharnians*, but even after that of the *Knights*. For the present we do not need to deal with it.

To make an accusation before the Senate was an unusual proceeding, applicable to certain offences which had not been formally defined by law. In such cases the Senate did not pass judgment according to a fixed written law, but according to the best interests of the people.[1] We can understand that Aristophanes was alarmed. The passage above quoted shows how great he thought his danger and how violent the attacks of Cleon were. The latter seems very shrewdly to have ignored his personal grievances. He accused the poet of "having spoken ill of the city in the presence of strangers," and of having "insulted public officials, elected or chosen by lot." We do not know positively what penalty Aristophanes would have suffered had he been found guilty. An ancient authority informs us that it was one of the severest, without further defining it.[2] The penalty probably varied within certain limits, but the poet most certainly ran a heavy risk.

It is a great pity that the various stages of this affair are not known. All that we can say is that Aristophanes came out of it unscathed: his tone in the *Acharnians* gives decisive proof of this. If we choose, we may surmise that the influence of some powerful friends stood him in good stead. But even so, it must not be forgotten that the Athenian Senate was not at this time at all an aristocratic body. As its members were

[1] Harpocration, *Εἰσαγγελία*, Pollux, viii. 51. The passage in *The Polity of the Athenians* attributed to Xenophon (ii. 18), in which he says "the Athenians do not permit the people to be made the subject of comedy nor to be ill spoken of," does not seem to refer to a formal written law. At any rate, such a law did not exist in 426, for, had it existed, Cleon would have prosecuted Aristophanes before a court and not before the Senate.

[2] Harpocration, *loc. cit.* Aristotle's account, *Constitution of Athens*, 45, indicates that before the introduction of the appeal to the people, the Senate could, in certain cases, even pronounce sentence of death. It is clear that this cannot apply here.

simply chosen by lot every year, it seems certain that it was at that time open to all classes of society, even to the very poorest.[1] Therefore if the Senate showed a friendly disposition toward Aristophanes, we may be sure it was not owing to any veiled sympathy with the opposition. It is more likely that the poet, or his patrons, succeeded in showing that the prosecution misinterpreted his intentions, and that, in fact, he had not wished to attack the people, but the politicians. Furthermore, the Athenian people as a whole, and without distinction of party, seem to have been kindly disposed toward comedy. They liked it just as it was, with its unbridled license, and they did not care to have it made tiresome under the pretext of disciplining it. The restrictive law which Pericles had passed in 440 was enforced for three years only; since its abrogation the people had become so well accustomed to all the audacities of comedy that they no longer attached great importance to them.

So it probably came about that Cleon's high-sounding wrath was all in vain. The words of Aristophanes, "I almost perished," appear simply to indicate that his adversary managed to get together a fairly strong minority. And yet the argument drawn from the presence of strangers must have made an impression. The poet had observed this, and when, in the *Acharnians*, he was about to renew his attacks upon the prevailing policy, he took care to call attention to the fact that he was speaking to the citizens only, at a time when the strangers had not yet arrived.

Indeed, this was the only lesson he learned from this trying experience, which might have turned out badly. To change his style, to renounce political comedy, to forget Cleon—of this he was incapable. His impetuous nature urged him on to the combat, his friends summoned him to it, his interest and his honor as a poet were involved in it. He waited for an opportunity to renew the fight, and the opportunity soon presented itself, because he was waiting for it.

[1] Schoemann-Lipsius, *Griechische Alterthümer*, i. p. 396.

V

Still, it did not come immediately. Indeed, it is worth noting that in the following year, 425, Aristophanes neither attacked Cleon personally nor even the demagogues as a class.

At the Lenaean festival of that year he brought out the *Acharnians*, an ardent declaration in favor of peace.[1] It may be that one of his lost plays was performed at the Great Dionysia of the same year. We cannot affirm that this was the case. The *Acharnians*, therefore, affords us the only clue in our attempt to gain an idea of what was in his mind at that time. In this instance, we have to deal with a play which is still extant, and consequently we can at least argue from well-established evidence.

The first thing that strikes one in this play is that Cleon does not appear in it. A few satirical allusions to his misfortunes, or to his vices, would hardly deserve to be mentioned, were it not that one of them calls for an explanation. I have already cited this in a previous chapter, in order to point out that one of the methods of interpreting it must be regarded as incorrect.

What is the significance of the joy, which, at the beginning of the play, Dicaeopolis declares he felt in the preceding year when, thanks to the knights, Cleon was compelled to "disgorge his five talents"?[2] One of the scholiasts, following the historian Theopompus, tells us that Cleon had received five talents from the allies for proposing to the people a reduction of tribute in their favor, and that the knights got wind of this bargain and obliged him to return the money.[3] Taken literally, this explanation seems inadmissible; and indeed it is so.[4] We cannot imagine that a suit was brought against Cleon by the knights as a class, for they did not constitute a

[1] Argument of the *Acharnians*.

[2] *Acharnians*, l. 5, *τοῖς πέντε ταλάντοις, οἷς Κλέων ἐξήμεσε* . . .

[3] Schol. *Acharnians*, l. 6.

[4] Müller-Strübing, *Aristophanes und die historische Kritik*, Leipzig, 1873, pp. 119-181.

body possessing a civic personality. It is quite as difficult to believe that some of their number, secretly supported by the rest, should have charged Cleon with venality, and that they should have brought about his conviction. Such a conviction would, at least for a long time, have destroyed Cleon's authority, which, quite on the contrary, seems to have been more firmly established than ever in 425. Moreover, we meet with no allusion whatever to such an outcome in the later plays of Aristophanes.

Still, these considerations do not warrant us, as fair critics, in purely and simply rejecting the statement of Theopompus. Most probably the commentator misunderstood this statement, and attached greater importance to it than it really had.

The allusion of Aristophanes and that of the historian are sufficiently explained, if we assume that, after Cleon had in that year proposed to reduce the contributions of some of the allies, his proposal was rejected owing to the representations of some orator belonging to the class of the knights. Cleon's ill-wishers were sure to insinuate that he had demanded pay from the interested parties for the position he took, and that, thanks to the vigilance of his adversaries, he had been forced to return the money. This is the tale which Aristophanes took up and interpreted after his own fashion, and which Theopompus perhaps likewise accepted as the truth.[1]

Further on in the play the same Dicaeopolis defies Cleon: "Let him scheme and intrigue against me as much as he likes. Right is on my side and justice will be my ally. I, at any rate, need not fear that I shall be convicted of being a bad citizen and a debauchee, as he has been."[2] Does this defiance refer to a renewal of hostilities? That is hardly probable. It merely proves that at this time Aristophanes felt sufficiently reassured to taunt his adversary.

[1] Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 994, note 6, has suggested another explanation. He surmises that Cleon was the chief of the treasurers (Ἑλληνοταμίαι) in 427-426, and that, in this capacity, he withheld, an account of his hostility to the Knights, the sum which the state allowed them for forage, and which amounted to five talents. This would then be the sum the Knights forced him to give up.

[2] *Acharnians*, ll. 659-664.

But these words were uttered casually and these taunts were of no consequence. In a word, Cleon is not directly attacked in the *Archarnians*; and this is the more surprising when we recall that the object of the play is to ridicule the advocates of war to the bitter end, and that, according to the formal statement of Thucydides, Cleon was the most decided opponent of all proposals making for peace.[1] Shall we infer that the poet was moved to take this attitude by considerations of prudence? A mere semblance of probability might lead us to think so; but a close examination of the play affords quite a different view of the case, and gives us an insight into the conflict of public opinion and into Aristophanes' own relation to political parties.

And first let us observe how the party which advocated war to the bitter end is impersonated in his comedy. Therein lies, unless I am mistaken, the decisive point, and one that has not yet been given all the attention it merits.

The champions of war are, on the one hand, the chorus, consisting of charcoal-burners from Acharnae, and on the other, the taxiarch Lamachus. What are we to think of them respectively?

Lamachus cannot be regarded as a representative of any party. Neither his father, Xenophanes, nor he himself, appears to have played any important part in the politics of the day. Nowhere does Aristophanes picture him as being associated with the demagogues, and nothing in his play indicates a desire to decry him as a soldier-politician or as the tool of the popular leaders. The man he seems to have in view is the professional officer, who makes a livelihood by the pursuit of arms and who would not amount to anything in the state were it left without a standing army after the re-establishment of peace. He humorously calls him "Spoudarchides" ("a man whose ambition it is to command"), and "Mistharchides" ("a man of lucrative commands").[2] These two words sum up

[1] Thucydides, v. 16. This statement refers, it is true, to the year 422; but there is every reason to believe that Cleon's attitude in this matter had never varied.

[2] *Acharnians*, ll. 595 and 597. For the word σπουδαρχίδης cf. Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 14, note 1.

his satirical conception of this type of man. The peasant Dicaeopolis, speaking for the poet, is set against this class of professional men-at-arms, to whom, in case of war, well-paid positions are given, and who frequently are appointed ambassadors, on account of their prominence or of their technical knowledge.[1] He abhors the very profession; those who follow it are, in his eyes, the natural enemies of peace. The fact that, in this passage, Lamachus has the honor of representing all his colleagues is probably due to his name, which smacks of battle, or perhaps to some other personal reason of which we know nothing. At all events, Aristophanes made no attempt to individualize him. Even his raillery is of a general character. The absurd traits which he imputes to him are the absurdities of the profession, and he carries them to the point of caricature: love of martial array, braggadocio, and a loud voice, fit to scare children. This applies also to the misfortunes of the poor taxiarch: they are those that befall the profession. Thus we see that the comedy deals harshly not with a political faction, as such, but with that liking for war, which a certain class of citizens entertained from purely personal motives.

The Acharnians who constitute the chorus are true peasants, just such as Dicaeopolis; by turns wood-choppers, charcoal-burners or vintners. In time of peace they lived at quite a distance from Athens, in their big village of Acharnae and its suburbs, at the foot of Mt. Parnes, whose underwood and brakes of green oak they exploited. We may be sure that they did not constitute Cleon's regular supporters, and that these honest folk had nothing in common with the famished clients of the demagogues who battened on lawsuits and delighted in the debates of the ecclesia. Besides, they formally declare that they detest him.[2] Had Aristophanes wished to represent the advocates of war to the bitter end as the mere tools of those politicians whom he had flayed to the very quick in the *Babylonians*, he would not have brought them

[1] *Acharnians*, ll. 599-619.

[2] *Acharnians*, l. 300: *ὡς μεμίσηκά σε Κλέωνος ἔτι μᾶλλον, ὃν κατατεμῶ τοῖσιν ἱππεῦσι καττύματα.*

before his audience in the costume and with the characteristics of these honest, vigorous labourers.

His train of thought was quite different. He appraised the situation with that intuitive acumen which he more than once displayed. Much as he personally abhorred war, he felt at this juncture that, although it was not exactly popular, it was, to say the least, accepted with faith and ardor by a very large number of Athenians, without distinction of class or opinion, and perhaps even by a part of the rural population which suffered from it more particularly. Doubtless this ardor occasionally showed signs of lagging; people longed for peace, complained bitterly of all the hardships they had to endure, dreamed of their fields, of a quiet and easy life, of their beautiful rustic festivals, of well-stocked markets, of smiling and bounteous peace. But these dreams touched the imagination without penetrating into the depths of the soul, or reaching the mainsprings of the will. The will remained firm; for all the grievances of yesterday were always present, like so many fresh wounds that the war inflamed with each year that passed. To have pictured on the stage this national struggle as the work of a political party, and, above all, as that of a politician whom no one esteemed in his heart, would have meant running the risk of gravely offending public opinion. Aristophanes was much too shrewd to make such a mistake.

His Acharnians are honest in their convictions. They instinctively detest Lacedaemon as the hereditary and perfidious enemy of their country.[1] And, what is more, they are furious because the invader has devastated, torn up, and burnt their vineyards.[2] These are not ridiculous sentiments, and the poet never could have thought of making fun of them. If the members of the chorus provoke laughter, it is only in their external aspect. It was the fashion among the Athenian city folk to joke about these rustics, who were seen in the streets of the town, stick in hand, driving before them their donkeys laden with great bags of charcoal.[3] Aristophanes knew how

[1] *Acharnians*, ll. 290, 308: *οἵσιν οὔτε βωμὸς οὔτε πίστις οὐθ' ὅρκος μένει.*

[2] *Acharnians*, l. 226: *οἵσι παρ' ἐμοῦ πόλεμος ἐχθοδοπὸς αὔξεται τῶν ἐμῶν χωρίων.*

[3] Hesychius, *Ἀχαρνικοὶ ὄνοι.*

to put this disposition to jest about them to good use. He drew a humorous picture of them, as raging old men armed with cudgels, who shout, run about and carry on; he was careful not to forget the bag of charcoal; he calls it their beloved child which they will save at any cost.[1] Add to this their make-up, their gestures, their by-play and dances, and you have all that is needed to delight a popular audience. But this buffoonery was not directed against the sound morals of these peasants, whom the poet loved and whom he had not the slightest intention of treating as enemies. And besides, their warlike rage is nothing but a folly of short duration, or rather a misunderstanding. They have been duped. Dicaeopolis needs but to open their eyes, and we shall again see their peaceable nature assert itself.

Thus, according to Aristophanes, the war party consists, in the first place, of a lot of honest and sincerely patriotic people, instinctive friends of peace and fruitful labor, but for the moment carried away by quite legitimate feelings which they exaggerate, and led astray by false ideas which others have foisted upon them. The same party, furthermore, consists of certain professional military men, whom the war supplies with a livelihood and heaps with honors, and who would be nobodies without it. He jokes pleasantly about the former group, but takes good care not to lash them. The second group meet with harsher treatment: in Aristophanes' eyes the valiant Lamachus is nothing but a contemptible fellow who plays the bully. But even this is of no great consequence: this pygmy is too pitiable a figure to bear the weight of satire. The poet's satire strikes other people, of whom we must now speak.

Aristophanes' real adversary in the *Acharnians*, the chief butt of his satire, is the instigator of the war, Pericles, who had died four years previously, but still survived in his opinions, which were always present to the minds of the Athenians, where they had taken root and, as it were, hardened into dogma.

How does the poet make his attack on the famous statesman?

[1] *Acharnians*, ll. 326-340.

He does not put him on the boards in person; perhaps there were many reasons for this which one might guess at, but I believe the chief consideration was that it would have been impossible, unless he were to be made grotesquely insignificant, to bring him before an audience without making him defend his political attitude. Now that would have been tantamount to introducing an appeal to sentiments which comedy had above all to avoid awakening. His attack is therefore made merely by means of speeches and narrative, while Pericles is purposely left in the background of the past. The poet takes good care to say nothing of the more or less cogent or specious reasons which, in fact, he might have alleged. Dicaeopolis speaks in the name of the poet.[1] We know how guardedly he does it, and what buffoonery he is careful to employ, in order first to put his hearers in good humor. But let us examine the matter more closely. Is Pericles represented in this speech either as a leader of the people or as the spokesman of a political party? Not at all. He appears as the toy of a woman, as the slave of Aspasia's caprice; and the very disproportion between the cause and the effect casts ridicule on his eloquence. The thunder of his words reverberated through peaceful Greece, his speeches let loose a tempest and upset the world; and why? Because a few courtesans had been kidnapped! Then came the decree forbidding the Megarians to trade with Athens, a decree which the poet succeeds in making ridiculous by playing upon its very provisions. Thereupon Lacedaemon espoused the cause of her allies. Would not Athens have done as much had her allies been interfered with? In a word, all the motives for war amount only to slight and insignificant grievances, rendered bitter by a redoubtable orator, who, purely from selfish interest, managed to keep the Athenians from seeing things in their true light.

In its form the attack does not look very serious; but we must grasp the intention that underlay this sportive form. Granted that the facts just recited are mere gossip, the inference, to the poet's thinking, is that war was actually begun on

[1] *Acharnians*, l. 496 *et seq.*

account of idle bickerings, which a true statesman would have disregarded with contempt. That is what he conveys after his own fashion in the language of comedy. Little does he care whether the details are true or false; he occupies himself with their essential truth. In his eyes, the important thing is that they should, in a humorous way, represent the kind of grievances that brought about the fatal vote. As for the more serious reasons, those, for instance, that alone struck a Thucydides, there is nothing to prove that he did not perceive them. But then these reasons would have justified an eternal war, for they arose from the very conditions that governed the existence of the two rival states, and they were bound to endure until one or the other, or both of them at once, were completely exhausted. Thus there was the choice of fighting for an indefinite time or of making peace as soon as possible, and seeking to live on good terms, notwithstanding the permanent causes of conflict. Aristophanes thought that the second alternative was the better, and to-day the impartial historian apparently thinks he was right. This being the case, he, no doubt, judged that it was wiser to let the serious grievances slumber, and to speak of them as little as possible. Indeed he did not speak of them at all, and he acted wisely.

Unless I am mistaken, this feeling of patriotic prudence had a great deal to do with the exceptional reserve which, in this instance, he maintained toward the demagogues. The same considerations that had kept him from attributing too much importance to the policy of Pericles, even though he openly opposed it, must also have kept him from letting either Cleon or any of his companions appear on the stage; they even kept him from directly discussing them. He did not wish to be obliged to impute to them speeches which would have to be of a kind to stir up a part of his audience, if they were to retain any degree of probability. He did not even wish, by attacking them too savagely, to awaken the passions that divided the Athenian public on this national question. The feelings to which he appealed were such as were shared by all to a greater or less degree. Leaving it to the past to take care of the burning question on whom the true responsibility rested, he

let it appear that it was not on a party, but on a single man who was no longer alive. He purposely ignored prudent consideration of the future, of deep-seated and lasting rivalries, of the inevitable conflict between Athenian democracy and Spartan oligarchy, and chose to insist only on the benefits of peace and on the insignificance of the sacrifice of self-esteem that it would call for in the present emergency.

Thus it came about that, by way of exception, he wrote a play which had nothing to do with the strife of parties, and which was simply and solely inspired by what he considered the interests of the nation. It even happened that, as if to make his intentions clearer, he pictured his habitual allies as momentarily at odds: he made the peasants of Acharnae oppose the peasant Dicaeopolis. But he set them at odds merely for a moment, so that he might presently reconcile them and finally bring them together in a joyful exodus, celebrating the pleasures of peace which they had re-established.

CHAPTER II

THE KNIGHTS

I

ARISTOPHANES' war upon the leaders of the demagogical party, which had apparently been suspended while he was writing the *Acharnians*, is directly afterwards renewed with violence in the comedy of the *Knights*, performed at the Lenaean festival of the year 424, and consequently written in the last months of 425. So far as its pervading spirit is concerned, this play is a sort of continuation of the *Babylonians*; but it appears to have exceeded the latter play in virulence. At all events it was to have a very different scope, whether this was due to existing circumstances or to the more advanced thought of the poet. In the *Babylonians* the rule of the demagogues had been attacked by the brilliant pamphleteer as the instrument of a hateful tyranny that lay heavily upon the allies of Athens. In that play it was merely a question of excesses of a very special sort, such as are closely connected with the existence of a maritime confederacy. In the *Knights* he censures, and even more boldly, the domestic government of these same demagogues, the means they adopt to influence the people, indeed all the principles or passions that animate them. Although he speaks only of Athens and of his own contemporaries, he is, perforce, led to touch upon certain matters that recur more or less at all periods and in all places, because they are part and parcel of that human nature on which all social life hinges.

What led Aristophanes to write this dramatic pamphlet, perhaps the most audacious that was ever put upon the stage? This is the question which it is our duty to study first. We shall thus see how much influence it is proper to attribute to the various political parties in the plot of his play.

A glance at this plot reveals that it is based, on the one hand, upon certain political incidents of the day, and, on the other, upon a whole array of reflections that have, as it were, crystallized about these incidents. It is important to note this distinction at the very outset.

As to the incidents, they were the deeds and political successes of Cleon in 425. In that year Cleon was for a second time chosen by lot to exercise the functions of senator. This made it possible for him to exert a preponderating influence on the grand council of the republic, which supervised the administration of the navy and that of the treasury, discussed with the generals the measures to be undertaken, and worked out, in advance, all the deliberations of the assembly. It was probably at this time that he had the pay of the heliasts raised to three obols, and that he induced the people to increase the tribute imposed upon the allies.[1]

But his influence chiefly manifested itself in the affair at Pylus and Sphacteria. There is no need to recall it here in detail.[2] It will be remembered how Demosthenes, one of the most energetic and intelligent soldiers of this period, hit upon the happy idea of occupying a position on the west coast of Peloponnesus, which was to gather about an Athenian garrison the numerous enemies that Sparta had in that region, and particularly the oppressed Messenians and the fugitive helots. The point he occupied was Pylus, and not only were the Athenians able subsequently to repel the attempt made by the Spartans to dislodge them, but, what was more, the Peloponnesian fleet was destroyed by the Athenian fleet. Besides, a body of Lacedaemonian troops was blockaded in the harbor of Pylus, on the little island Sphacteria, and it was not very long before its situation became desperate. Since the beginning of

[1] For these facts consult the description of G. Gilbert, *Beiträge*, pp. 177-194.

[2] For the entire account consult Thucydides, iv. cap. 4-41.

the war Athens had never gained so decided an advantage. The glory of it fell, in the first instance, to Demosthenes, who had conceived and carried out the successful venture, and in the next, to Nicias, who appears to have been sent as general to conduct the campaign, and who had successfully organized the defence of Pylus and the blockade of Sphacteria.

Sparta was struck with consternation, and made overtures of peace. Cleon prevented their being accepted. No doubt he thought Athens could be more exacting, when she had once forced her beleaguered enemy to surrender. But the campaign which had begun so brilliantly was prolonged through the Summer. The Spartans who were blockaded on the island secretly received provisions and refused to surrender. The Athenian generals dared not make an attack across the dense brakes which encircled the island like a natural rampart. Public opinion at Athens was disturbed. The bad weather was sure to incapacitate the cruisers, and therefore to put an end to the blockade, thus permitting the Spartans to escape. People began to wonder how the matter would end.

It was at this juncture that Cleon interfered in a decisive manner. One day, after publicly finding fault with the incapacity and the inertness of the generals, he declared, with his habitual braggadocio, that, if he had been in their place, he would have brought the whole business to an end long since. He was taken at his word, and found himself entrusted, by a decree of the assembly, with the command of the expedition, in place of Nicias. The latter, delighted at the chance of getting even with him, had willingly resigned in his favor. The demagogue was at first disconcerted, but he accepted the appointment, and, once in command, he displayed intelligence and energy. He collected a body of light troops, such as were needed for the attack, and proceeded to Pylus, where he made a complete plan of campaign with the help of Demosthenes. An accidental fire on the island had just destroyed a part of the woods—a lucky chance for Cleon. He had the good sense to take advantage of it. The assault, under his lead, had the best possible success. All the Spartans who did not perish in the fight fell into the hands of the victors. Cleon's return to

Athens was a triumph; he brought with him nearly three hundred prisoners, of whom a hundred and twenty were Spartans—precious hostages for subsequent negotiations. The people thought that now they were in a safe position to dictate their own terms of peace. The deeds of Demosthenes and of Nicias were forgotten. Cleon was the hero of the hour, had honors heaped upon him, and gained all the credit of this magnificent success.

The unfairness of this popular verdict seems to have suggested to Aristophanes the first idea of his play; at all events he derived from it the conception of the initial scheme upon which the plot is built up. But this scheme, based, as we have seen, on a simple incident, could at best have produced only a play of transient interest, had it not been enriched by a mass of reflections that went far beyond it.

Cleon's astonishing good luck did not begin at Sphacteria. We have already seen what manner of man he was and how he began his career. He had already emerged from obscurity during the lifetime of Pericles, and a few years had sufficed to make him the real leader of Athenian politics. Success of this kind must have seemed scandalous to the circles in which Aristophanes moved. If they had used calm judgment, they would perhaps have recognized that it had a partial explanation in certain qualities of the demagogue, who was by no means an ordinary man. But resentment and hatred, whether they were warranted or not, blinded the best minds, or rather, when they discussed his successes, their natural perspicacity was directed solely to laying bare the viciousness of the man and of the whole regime. Moreover, their estimates, fair and profound as they often were, but incomplete and *ex parte*, became, as it were, an ever-growing nucleus about which base slander and insulting innuendo gathered. And so it came about that the clubs developed a caricatured portrait of the man who was the object of universal anger, and, together with it, a strong anti-democratic doctrine. We shall see presently with how great power of invention the comic poet managed to complete this portrait, to make an issue of it, to adapt it for the comic stage, how, in a word, he stamped it with his own mark. As for the

anti-democratic doctrine, we must not seek for it in his play, for, in its complete form, it does not appear there at all. Indeed, in order to appreciate to what extent and for what reasons he gave it so wide a berth, it is necessary to gain as exact a picture of it as possible from the records that still permit us to study it.

II

This doctrine was based on the idea, common to all the old Greek aristocracies, that the people were incapable of self-government. We know the insulting acrimony with which Theognis expressed it as early as the sixth century. "Trample underfoot," he cried, "crush with thy heel the empty-headed commons!"[1] Beneath this cry of anger and vengeance there lay even at that time a well-defined conviction. In the fifth century it was to be formally stated by the earliest political theorists. Herodotus, at any rate, attributes it to the Persian prince Megabazus, when he rejected the democratic projects of Otanes: "The masses have no practical sense; there exists nothing less intelligent, nothing more insolent. It would be folly to give oneself over to the tyrannical caprice of an undisciplined people, in order to escape that of a monarch. The tyrant at least knows what he is doing when he acts; the people do not know. How can they be expected to know, since they have neither education nor an inborn appreciation of the beautiful? They rush headlong into action, and then carry it on without reflecting, like a torrent let loose."[2] Here we see opinion developing into theory. The speaker states reasons which he derives from a summary observation of the facts. The champion of oligarchy declares that the people, as he sees them, are not only without the rudiments of education, but also lack what might make up for it—that instinct which comes of inherited discipline. He may have come across these ideas (which, by the way, Herodotus does not lay up against him) in Greece, among those aristocracies which were imbued with the Pythagorean spirit.

[1] Theognis, 847: λὰξ ἐπίβα δήμῳ κενεόφρονι.

[2] Herodotus, iii. 81.

That they were current in Athens in aristocratic circles is attested both by history and by literature.

Nowhere do we find them stated with more acrimony than in the work, *The Polity of the Athenians*, wrongly attributed to Xenophon, but probably written at Athens by a political theorist and partisan of oligarchy, about the year 424.[1] This little work, which has neither a beginning nor an end, seems to be a detached fragment of a composition in the form of a treatise, which may possibly have dealt with democracy in general, or with certain democracies in particular. When he reaches the Athenian democracy, the author constrains himself to examine it in a philosophical spirit, without, it is true, disguising his aversion to it, but also without allowing his judgment to be obscured by that aversion. He forcefully attacks certain opinions that were evidently current round about him. Hearing people say that democracy is absurd, and that corrupt, impetuous and hostile as it is to every form of justice and to all decency, it needs must presently be transformed or go under—he methodically proceeds to prove that, far from being absurd, the Athenian democracy lives up to its principles, and consequently acts in a rational and logical manner. He also maintains that it cannot be transformed, nor even appreciably modified, without losing its democratic character; and, lastly, that the people it harms are too few in number to be a serious menace to it. In a way, this statement, as strange as it is interesting, is an apology, but an apology that amounts to an accusation, as the orator finds the only justification for democracy in its complete adherence to its principles. He sits in judgment on them and declares them

[1] Few works have been studied more, and more discussed. All these discussions have been clearly and conveniently summed up in Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, pp. 609-616. None of the opinions hitherto expressed completely satisfies me. The work gives me the impression of being a fragment. I shall explain, in the course of this discussion, what I conceive to be its general purpose. The author must have belonged to the faction of Antiphon. He is a thinker who aims at precision, who wishes to see and to show things as they really are; he has something of the spirit of Thucydides in him. His seeming incoherence arises, in part, from the defective state of the manuscripts. As a matter of fact, and notwithstanding a certain stiffness and an occasional clumsiness, this thinker is a literary man.

abominable. The very vehemence that lurks under his assumed coolness, speaks for the force of the opinions which he discusses. We divine them, nay, we see them behind his refutation. More instructive historical evidence than this is rarely found.

He is of the same mind with those whom he wishes to enlighten, and he begins by openly declaring that all respectable people are quite right in abhorring popular government. He says: "In every country the best elements are opposed to democracy. And who constitute the best elements? Are they not those in whose circles there exists the least dissoluteness or wrong-doing, and who devote themselves most seriously to honest pursuits? Now, it is among the common people that we find, in highest degree, ignorance, moral depravity, dishonesty. More than all others, they are driven to disgraceful acts by poverty, by lack of education, by ignorance, and some of them in particular by impending destitution."[1] Here we have the first fact which he thinks evident, nay, incontestable. This fact once recognized, what room is there for surprise that the government of a democratic state is in the hands of the very worst elements in the city? "If the respectable people could gain a hearing, if their advice were taken, the result would doubtless be advantageous to those who are of their own kind, but not to the common people. On the other hand, anybody, any worthless fellow, getting up to speak as he pleases, is sure to discover what is advantageous to himself and his fellows. Can you expect such a person to be a competent judge of his own and the people's interests? The fact is, the common people think that the ignorance and dishonesty of such a counsellor, who is in entire sympathy with them, avail them better than the sagacity and the excellence of a respectable man, who feels only antipathy for them."[2] Of course they would make a mistake if they wished to be well governed; but they have not the slightest disposition so to be governed. "The people are not anxious that the city have good laws, if, as a result, they are forced to obey them. They want to be free and to rule. That the laws happen to

[1] *Polity of the Athenians*, cap. v. [2] *Ibid.* c. vi.

be bad, is a matter of indifference to them."[1] Thus, power in the hands of the most disreputable elements is, in the eyes of the writer, the necessary concomitant, and, as it were, the basic law of democracy, and to his mind this lies in the nature of things. All that follows is merely the development of this idea. From beginning to end of his treatise he shows us the people doing evil, not by chance, not from a momentary impulse, not because they are misled, but because evil-doing is their special province. The choice of their counsellers or of their governors is therefore dictated by a selfish, but correct, appreciation of their interests. And this quite naturally leads up to the idea, already touched upon, that democracy cannot be reformed without ceasing to be democracy.

Doubtless this doctrine was not accepted, in this extreme form, by all who constituted the opposition at Athens in 424. The treatise with which we are dealing would have had no object, had all those to whom it is addressed been convinced in advance of what it proclaims. Yet it is just the certainty of its conclusions that it presents in a manner hitherto not understood. It takes up ideas that are vague, scattered and partially apprehended, analyses them, makes them clear by citing facts of daily occurrence and assembles them in groups. No doubt all who belonged to the militant oligarchical party were in the main of the same opinion as the author.[2] The platform of the hetairies was based on these ideas. People did not believe in the possibility of an honest democracy. As a matter of politics, they pretended to wish to reform it, as it existed; in fact they strove to replace it by an oligarchy, which some wished to be moderate, and others absolute and clothed with authority.

Our question is whether these ideas are to be found in Aristophanes' *Knights*, and whether, if their influence is felt in one part or another of the play, it was profound enough to suggest to the poet what was essential in his thesis. In other

[1] *Polity of the Athenians*, c. viii.

[2] Cf. Thucydides, vi. 89. 6. Alcibiades' speech at Sparta: *ἐπεὶ δημοκρατίαν γε καὶ ἐγιγνώσκομεν οἱ φρονοῦντές τι . . . ἀλλὰ περὶ ὁμολογουμένης ἀνοίας οὐδὲν ἂν καινὸν λέγοιτο.*

words, did he wish to portray democracy as condemned by its very nature to wrong-doing, or did he strive to reform the Athenian people by pointing out to them the faults, not of their constitution, but of their current policies, and by inspiring them with disgust for the men who enjoyed their confidence?

III

We know the general outline of the plot. A Paphlagonian slave, a rascally and vulgar fellow, recently purchased by old Demos, has become the favorite of his master, owing to his gift of flattery. He reigns supreme in the house; everybody trembles before him. The audience had no difficulty in recognizing Cleon. Two old servants, molested and robbed by this intruder, plot to put him out. They produce a rival in the person of a peddling sausage-seller, a rascal without scruples and up to anything. Prompted by them, this rustic begins by trying to frighten the Paphlagonian. Denounced by him before the Senate as a public enemy, he eludes his attack. Subsequently, when old Demos, attracted by their noisy dispute, looks in upon them, the sausage-seller harangues him and brings accusations against his favorite. The old man agrees to judge between them. Then, in his presence, they vie in eloquence and vie in flattery, in attentions and even in gifts, during a long series of ever varying scenes, composed in a spirit of buffoonery. Finally the sausage-seller wins the day: Demos withdraws his confidence from the Paphlagonian and bestows it upon the newcomer. This fellow, becoming in turn undisputed master of the situation, by means of a magic operation restores the old man to youth, who forswears his errors and allows him who has thus transformed him to dictate the principles of his future conduct. The Paphlagonian is driven off, and condemned to take the tray of his successful rival and to ply his trade at the city gates, just as the latter used to do.

Accessory to this plot is a chorus which has given the piece its name, the chorus of the knights; and towards them we must now turn our attention.

Is it necessary to accept the view sometimes expressed, that, on the day of performance, this chorus was actually composed of young men belonging to the class from which the Athenian cavalry was recruited?[1] Why should we assume so strange a departure from what was customary? This error arose from a too literal interpretation of an ancient authority.[2] The chorus, it is true, represents itself as being a chorus of young knights; but all comic choruses similarly lay claim to a character which is, of course, a pure fiction. For example, are we to believe that the chorus of the *Acharnians* was actually made up of people from Acharnae? There is not the slightest difference between the two cases.

Moreover this question is of quite secondary importance for us. Whatever was the real nature of the members of Aristophanes' chorus at the Lenaean festival of 424, they represented the young Athenian knights on the stage, and consequently, as far as the audience was concerned, for whom the dramatic fiction was created, it was these young knights who appeared in person to take part in the action.

Now, it is rather hard to believe that the poet would have dared to give them the part that he made them play, without having first secured their consent. It was surely an unusual thing thus to introduce upon the stage, in a more or less grotesque disguise, the flower of Athenian aristocracy, and particularly in the military function in which lay their greatest pride. The Athenian cavalry had at that time probably not been organized more than about thirty years.[3] Enlarged from time to time, in Aristophanes' day it consisted of a thousand members, who were recruited from among the young men. It was divided into two troops, each of five squadrons, commanded by two

[1] Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 190; cf. Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1123.

[2] *Knights*, Argum. i.: *αὐτοὶ οἱ Ἀθηναίων ἱππεῖς συλλαβόντες ἐν χοροῦ σχήματι παραφαίνονται.* Argum. ii.: *ὁ δὲ χορὸς ἐκ τῶν ἱππέων ἔστιν.* Cf. Schol. l. 247: *τοῦ χοροῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἱππέων συμπληρουμένου.* I do not believe that any of these passages has the precise meaning attributed to it. Even if it had, that would establish nothing beyond the antiquity of the misinterpretation.

[3] Albert Martin, *Les Cavaliers athéniens*, Paris, Thorin, 1887; Helbig, *Les Ἱππεῖς athéniens*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1902.

hipparchs and ten phylarchs.[1] Proud of their horses, of their arms, of their appearance, these dashing cavalrymen liked to attract attention, and with their defiling and drilling they added beauty to the festivals of the city. This brilliant band of youths were the ornament of Athens. Phidias had just finished portraying them on the frieze of the Parthenon, which had been completed shortly before the Peloponnesian war. Later on, another artist, Xenophon, was to describe them in his *Hipparchus*, at the same time teaching them clever evolutions, of a kind to bring out their best points. The common people liked to make fun of the airs of these young men, of their vanity and of their affected elegance, but this did not prevent their admiring them on holidays. Besides, they had repeatedly distinguished themselves since the beginning of the war. In 431, at the time of the first invasion by the Peloponnesians, they did their share in harassing the enemy and in driving them away from the walls of Athens. In 430 Pericles embarked four hundred of them, a quite novel thing at that time, and they helped him ravage the coast of Peloponnesus. Quite recently again, in 425, in the assault made by Nicias on the territory of Corinth, the two hundred knights who took part in the expedition had rendered valuable service.[2] In brief, they had an excellent reputation in the city at this time, and they were by nature not inclined to underestimate their own importance. We have already seen that if Cleon had had a bone to pick with them, he would probably have been the worse for it. Their influence must have been felt in the theatre more than elsewhere, for their families controlled a large number of dependents in the city itself, and were influential in the country districts. They themselves were young, bold and noisy, and were not inclined to hide their feelings, nor to allow themselves to be ridiculed without protest.

How, then, could Aristophanes have brought them into contact with his ambitious sausage-seller, had he not had some sort of assurance that his temerity would be agreeable to them? We may assume that at least he acquainted some of them with

[1] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 61.

[2] Thucydides, ii. 22 and 56; iv. 42.

his plans, and that they undertook to inform the others and to guarantee their consent. Even though there may not have been co-operation, properly speaking, nor authority expressly given, there certainly was an agreement and even some preliminary encouragement. This is indeed what the poet intimates quite plainly in the words he gives to the corypheus, whose function it is to introduce the chorus to the audience and to recite the traditional anapaests: "If any comic poet of former times had tried to force us thus to appear before the audience and make an address to them, he would not easily have succeeded. But this poet of ours well deserves that we do something for him, for he hates those whom we ourselves hate, and he has the courage to speak the truth. Courageously he assaults the whirlwind and tornado."[1] Common grievances were thus loudly proclaimed. There was an alliance between the knights and the poet against the Paphlagonian, that is Cleon. What were these grievances? Was it a question merely of the quarrels, already referred to, between the demagogue and certain members of the aristocratic class? Or does the chorus here refer also to an obscure accusation which Cleon, according to a scholiast, launched against the young knights, charging them with having failed to do their duty as soldiers, an accusation that has been variously interpreted by modern scholars?[2] Without doubt the chorus had in mind not only all this, but other more general grievances as well. What people in all quarters detested in Cleon was his very method of governing, the influence he exerted upon the people and the use to which he put that influence. It is known that the poet Eupolis, who was at that time one of the masters of comic style, collaborated with Aristophanes, and it is probable that he wrote a considerable bit of the second parabasis for him.[3] And in this fact we have a clue, added to those which precede, that brings out the true character of the play. From these clues we may infer that it was not the audacious attack of an individual, prepared in solitary meditation. People must

[1] *Knights*, ll. 507-511.

[2] Schol. *Knights*, l. 226.

[3] Cratinus, fr. 200, Kock; Eupolis, fr. 78, Kock (Schol. *Clouds*, l. 554); Kirchoff, *Hermes*, xiii. 1878.

have spoken about it beforehand in the circles where the poet was sure to meet with the most favor. It may be that he told them of some of his conceits; they approved of them and suggested others to him. In a word, the work took on somewhat of the character of a collective manifesto, but still remained his own to carry out; and Aristophanes had reason to believe that, in case of danger, he would have vigorous support. Herein he was rather mistaken, as we shall see later on. But what influence did this alliance between the poet and the aristocracy, of whose existence there can really be no doubt, have upon the composition of the play, and, above all, on the rôle alloted to the chorus? That is quite a different question.

The more enterprising of the two slaves has just given the sausage-seller his instructions and has promised him the support of the thousand knights and of all respectable people.[1] Just at this moment Cleon comes out of the house, and his terrible looks, his thundering voice, his frightful threats, promptly create consternation among the conspirators. The only one who remains cool is the slave. He calls his allies, the knights, to his rescue, and suddenly they come galloping in furiously. Divided into two squadrons and commanded by the two hipparchs, Simon and Panaetios, they charge full tilt into the orchestra and attack the Paphlagonian, who flees headlong before them.[2] His foes are relentless and chase him from place to place, and, at the same time, heighten their own excitement by heaping abuse upon him. They reproach him for his plunderings, his greed, his shameless extortion in dealing with those who have accounts to render, and with timid rich people who tremble at the very mention of a lawsuit. Subsequently, when the sausage-seller is reassured and once more takes the leading part, they encourage him throughout his dispute with his rival, they admire and

[1] *Knights*, l. 226: *ἀλλ' εἰσὶν Ἱππῆς ἄνδρες ἀγαθοὶ χίλιοι*
καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν οἱ καλοί τε κἀγαθοί.

[2] The action here has been carefully studied and is particularly well explained in the work of P. Mazon, *Essai sur la composition des comédies d'Aristophane*, Paris, Hachette, 1905.

extol his audacity and keep tally of the points in his favor. They are delighted to see that Cleon has met his master in impudence. Finally, when the demagogue hurries off to lay his charges before the Senate, it is the chorus that launches his adversary on his track and invokes for him the protection of Zeus Agoraios.

There is no trace of general politics in all this. The knights do not express a single thought peculiar to a party. Their remarks are those of a spiteful opposition, exasperated against an enemy; they tear him to pieces in their speeches, but their attacks do not go beyond his person. Not a word about the serious defects laid at the door of a democratic constitution by the advocates of an oligarchy.

Does the spirit of caste become more noticeable in the parabasis? In the anapaests the knights proclaim their alliance with the poet, but it is an alliance against a rascal and nothing more. The strophic songs and the epirrhemes have quite another character. Here we do find opinions peculiar to the youthful aristocrats, expressed in various ways. At the start, they invoke Poseidon Hippios, the god who presides at horse-races, and rejoices when he sees the youthful drivers of chariots in their brilliant attire. Then they extol the virtues of their fathers, the representatives of the old families, valiant hoplites who have guarded and brought honor to the city, generals of former days, glorious and unselfish. Like them, they ask for a little glory only, and, into the bargain, the right to wear their hair long when once peace has been made. Their second invocation is addressed to Pallas, and is made in the name of the entire city. But, in conclusion, they once more speak of themselves, when they jokingly recall the exploits of their horses, that is their own exploits. In a word, this parabasis—and this is true of almost the whole of it—is certainly that part of the play in which they best appear as a distinct group and express their own views. These views have a dashing quality, an unchecked pride and naïveté, a bold and even somewhat haughty frankness which was well suited to these distinguished young men. Who would have dreamed of taking offence at them? Even here their language was in no

sense that of a party; it was the language of their age, with a slight touch of impertinence which must have amused the audience.

One may say that, from this point on, they take no further active part. They are merely witnesses of the second part of the play, in which from time to time, in a few words, they show the same disposition as in the first part, without however really taking a hand in the action. This is in agreement with the practice of comedy. It would therefore serve no purpose to mention, one by one, the short remarks, spoken or sung, which they intersperse between the scenes. We may, however, note the scornful criticism which they make of Demos after the scene of the oracles: "Oh people, it's a fine empire you've got; everybody dreads you as though you were a tyrant. But you are too easily led. You like to be flattered and fooled. You always turn open-mouthed toward him who happens to speak, and your mind, though present, journeys afar."[1] One could, if one chose, recognize here somewhat of the opinion of the Herodotean Megabyzus and of the pseudo-Xenophon about the ignorance and thoughtlessness of the people. It is, however, introduced with an airy and scornful grace which curiously lessens its import. And, above all, it must not be forgotten that the Athenian people were accustomed to hear themselves much more rudely spoken of by their favorite orators. Pericles did his full share of it, and Cleon himself, nay, Cleon in particular, seems to have taken a certain pride in repeating such things with intentional brutality, as he was one of those who excel in the art of concealing their cowardly complaisance under the rudeness of their utterances.

The second parabasis (1264-1315) is nothing more than a series of satirical attacks that have no connection with the plot, against Ariphrades and Cleonymos, obscure personages,[2] and finally against Hyperbolos. This last episode, an amusing

[1] *Knights*, ll. 1110-1119.

[2] Cleonymos appears to have been the author of a reform concerning the tribute to be paid by the allies, which became a law in 426 and resulted in increasing it (*CIA*, iv. 1, p. 141, No. 39a; cf. Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1118).

and fantastic protest by the triremes, young and old, against the plans for distant expeditions, is the one that tradition attributes to Eupolis. While singing or reciting the whole of this parabasis, the chorus in nowise plays the part of a social group or of a political party.

We must, however, especially note how little importance is attached to the chorus in the *dénouement.* When Demos, rejuvenated and transformed by Agoracritos, appears before the audience in the costume of former times, the knights enthusiastically greet the resurrection of old Athens; aside from this, they take no part whatever in this peaceful revolution. Agoracritos alone prescribes the rules for Demos' future conduct; during this time the chorus does not utter a single word, and this new policy ignores the interest of the class which they represent. Demos makes no promise that especially affects them. Of course it may be that, as they withdrew, they gave vent to their joy in a final song that has been lost. If this was the case, the whole scene warrants the conclusion that they merely expressed general views.

And so we see that Aristophanes did represent the knights as his allies, but solely in his personal fight against Cleon. As for Agoracritos' political reforms, he wished to have them instituted apart from the knights—with their approbation, no doubt, but without their active participation, and in nowise at their instigation or for their benefit. He introduced the knights into his play chiefly as elements of glowing life and humor. They bring with them their passions, their youth, their lyric note of patriotism or mockery; but if there is a political theory, or even the outline of a political theory, underlying the extravagant inventions of the poet, it is not in the rôle of the chorus that we must look for it. This is the first point that had to be made clear.

IV

Let us now take up the *dramatis personae* and attempt to discover just what they represent.

It can hardly be claimed that the two slaves who concoct and organize the attack on Cleon typify either a party or a class of society, or even represent, in the proper sense of the word, political personages of the day. The names of Demosthenes and Nicias, which are given them in the manuscripts, do not appear in the dialogue. These names were probably inserted into the list of characters at the beginning of the play by Alexandrian editors.[1] This was done on account of an allusion in the text to the expedition to Pylus (line 54 *et seq.*). But this allusion would at best warrant us in recognizing Demosthenes in the first slave;[2] the second slave would in any event have to remain nameless. In fact, even the first slave is Demosthenes only for an instant, in which he happens to be in a similar situation, and by no means throughout his rôle. Mere characters of the prologue and necessary adjuncts to the plot, the two slaves lack all historical individuality.

As for the intrigue that is imputed to them, we find no trace of it in the occurrences of the time. Cleon had opponents, but it does not appear that any party put forward or thought of putting forward a rival who was taught to fight him with his own weapons.

Still, in the words of these two buffoons are found the only utterances of the play that can really be characterized as anti-democractic; but, as they refer to the sausage-seller Agoracritos, their import will have to be examined when we study that character.

Agoracritos is inseparable from the Paphlagonian, namely Cleon. Together they make an indissoluble group, in which the poet's thought is really revealed.

This thought is in the main very simple. Cleon, as the poet conceives, is a man whose power lies solely in anticipating and satisfying all the desires of the multitude. As soon as another politician of the same stamp dares to apply the same

[1] See argument No. 2 and Dindorf's note in his edition.

[2] It is worth noticing that it is reproduced in line 742, and that here it no longer applies to the slave. We must not forget that ancient comedy is the freest, most extravagant form of composition, and that, in dealing with an Aristophanes, we must never take things too exactly.

system of government with still greater impudence and vulgarity, that politician is bound to oust Cleon. This is practically a moral necessity. It was the function of comedy to translate it into action and to lend it that kind of obviousness, striking though vulgar, which is peculiar to dramatic demonstration. The idea itself is not of Aristophanes' own creating. There can be no doubt that he repeatedly heard it expressed in opposition circles. The germ of it is found in the above-cited passages from pseudo-Xenophon, and it is virtually formulated in the sentence where Thucydides shows us the successors of Pericles trying to outdo one another and vying in favors to the people (ii. 65. 10). Of course, there is a bare possibility that Thucydides remembered the *Knights* of Aristophanes when he wrote this passage, but it is much more likely that he simply recorded the talk of Athenian society shortly before his exile. But among those who upheld the theory of oligarchy, this idea was accepted as a law inherent in the very nature of democracy. Our task is to learn whether Aristophanes thus conceived and presented the case.

We know how the slave reveals to the amazed sausage-seller his vocation as a statesman: "Yes, it is just the fact that you are a scoundrel, and that you come from the market, and that you blush at nothing, that will make a great man of you." When the rogue, attracted and distrustful at the same time, seems to hesitate, "Come now," he asks him, "are you perchance conscious in your own mind of something honorable?" No, nothing of the kind: he is born of parents who belong to the dregs of the people, and he himself is as ignorant and vulgar as one could desire, besides being dishonest when occasion arises—he is the very man that is wanted. "Mark my words," says his mentor, "nowadays the guiding of the people is no longer the business of an educated or of a respectable man; it rightfully belongs to him who is ignorant and low in every way" (*εἰς ἀμαθὴ καὶ βδελυρόν*).[1]

This is certainly a sharp verdict and a severe arraignment. At the same time, we must recall that the poet here employs the words of one of his characters to criticise an existing state

[1] *Knights*, ll. 180-193.

of affairs. He does not, by any means, say that it was always thus, and that it cannot be corrected so long as the people remain masters. We must therefore look to the rest of the play for explanation and elucidation of this initial verdict.

The fight is on between the two rivals. Had the poet clung to his first notion, Agoracritos would, in due course, have to appear to be worse than Cleon—not only more impudent, more vulgar, a greater flatterer and a greater hypocrite, but, above all, more intensely selfish and wicked. Just as Cleon, while professing to love the people, really loves only himself and seeks solely his own advantage, so his rival should likewise strive only to enrich himself, to live luxuriously and merrily at the expense of his dupe. Indeed, that would be the necessary condition for verifying the law just enunciated. If, on the contrary, Agoracritos is only apparently ambitious, if for all his vulgarity he is a respectable man, if he really desires the welfare of the people, and if he actually succeeds in correcting their ways, it must follow that the democracy is not irretrievably doomed to fall through its own defects, and that it may after all be reformed. Now, it is this second conception that prevails in the play, and we have only to inquire to what extent it may have been influenced either by the style of comedy, or by the need of dealing gently with the audience.

The first group of scenes, in which the two rivals are at loggerheads, has only slight interest for us. In them Agoracritos appears as a rustic, uses Billingsgate with raucous voice, just as we saw him above. Cleon, on the other hand, is nothing more than a sort of live scarecrow with a hideous mask, accustomed to make everybody tremble at his threats. Each, in turn, defies or even jostles the other, but, apart from a few scattered allusions, there is no political satire, except in so far as it lies in the situation itself and in the means of defence employed by the chief character. His most effective weapon is denunciation. He threatens to bring charges against whoever opposes him; indeed, it is with an accusation that this first encounter ends. Cleon, derided and thrashed by Agoracritos, who is helped by the Knights, hurries to the hall where the Council meets in order to denounce their plot.

There is no need to delay here in order to give an account of the meeting of the Council, for in fact satire here ceases completely and makes way for the play of fancy. At the outset we do undoubtedly feel that the poet is making fun of democracy's distrust, when he shows us its senators ever ready to accredit rumors of conspiracy, and that subsequently he finds diversion in their fickleness of mind, and in the ingenuous ease with which they swallow the empty rumors brought by anybody that happens along. Satire and ridicule, assuredly, but so airy and so cleverly turned into nonsense, that it is impossible to take it seriously.

The contest of the two rivals before the populace, which follows upon these scenes, deserves much closer attention. This contest is provoked by the Paphlagonian, because he thinks himself absolute master of the spirit of Demos. He declares that "he fools him as much as he chooses," and that "he knows the sops with which he is fed" (ll. 713, 715)—statements by which the poet seems to wish to make clear at the outset that he means to attack Cleon's craftiness and mendacity. On the other hand, the sausage-seller, in his initial profession of faith, forgetting for a moment who he is, quite clearly gives himself the airs of a representative of the respectables: "For a long time, O people, I have loved you and wished to do you a good turn, and many others, honorable and well-educated people, share my desire. But this fellow here prevents us. You are like boys who have lovers. You reject respectable and swell people, but abandon yourselves to such people as lamp-sellers, cobblers, catgut-stitchers and tanners" (ll. 734-740). It is evident that the poet, wittingly or unwittingly, betrays himself in this passage. His stage character for a moment lifts the mask of impudence and vulgarity under which he has been hiding, and we see who he really is. In unmasking himself, he also unmasks his rival. If Agoracritos represents "the respectable people," which doubtless means the middle class, as distinguished from the common people, it is clear that this Paphlagonian not only is Cleon, but that, in a general way, he represents the demagogues of low birth, or those who act like the populace in order to

rule it. This hint deserves to be borne in mind, but we must not exaggerate its importance.

Indeed, were we to follow it without reservation we should be misled at once. The decisive scene—the one in which Agoracritos denounces Cleon before Demos—does not afford what might have been expected of it in this particular. We should think that the enemy of demagogy would here lay bare the whole policy with which he was wont to charge it. But this is far from being the case. Agoracritos' attack on Cleon has not the character of a vigorous and violent demonstration. It is inconsequential, incoherent and interspersed with intentional absurdities. Far from seeking to bring out the general facts, it rather avoids them. It takes issue with the man, with some of his personal doings, with his selfish schemes. Agoracritos devotes himself chiefly to depriving him of his seeming good qualities, of his high-sounding titles which make him popular. He denies the service that Cleon claims to have done the people, makes every effort to show up the selfish interest of his whole conduct, even goes so far as to question his victory at Sphacteria, and, in order to encompass his ruin, humorously parodies his habitual resort to slanderous insinuation. Can it be said that there is complete absence of general reflections? No, there is at least one, which appears toward the end of the scene, in the passage where Agoracritos compares agitators of Cleon's stripe to fishers of eels: "You do just what those do who fish for eels. When the water is calm they catch nothing; but stir up the mud and there is a good catch. So you are sure of gain when you stir up the town" (ll. 864-867). This, we must admit, goes beyond Cleon's person—political methods and a whole class of men are aimed at in this shaft of satire, chiefly the advocates of war to the bitter end—and here again it is not Agoracritos that speaks, but the poet. Still, it is merely a group of men whose names might then have been mentioned that the poet has in mind. Democratic institutions themselves are no more involved here than before.

And now, what are we to think of the scene of the oracles and that of the presents? The former deals in a most

amusing way with one of the intellectual maladies of the time —the grovelling superstitiousness of the people—as well as with the cleverness of those who exploited it. The second scene exhibits, with humorous conceits and in extravagant caricature, the lawless rivalry of the politicians who at that time fawned upon the people. Beneath all this tomfoolery, we can clearly discern the satire—and it is as quick and sharp as it is apt to provoke laughter. We may even say that it is not without a certain depth, as, in the second scene, it evidently touches upon one of the permanent dangers that placed the Athenian democracy in jeopardy. It is, however, worth noting that this is one of the dangers that are inherent in every absolute power. Of course some may think that democracy, when it entirely lacks the restraint of established customs, is peculiarly menaced by it. But it cannot be said that this is a necessary interpretation of Aristophanes' scene. Taken by itself, it is merely an arraignment of prevailing conditions. On the one hand, it attacks the unscrupulous politicians who take for their plan of action, not what they believe is best for the people, but what they think is most apt to please. On the other hand, it attacks the excessive ingenuousness of the masses, who are the dupes of the politicians' empty protestations. Let the masses become more discerning, and the evil will be cured by that very fact. This is just what happens at the close of the play.

Cleon is in fact definitively beaten by his rival. We witness the crumbling of his power. Is a form of government involved in his downfall? Surely the Athenians did not so understand it; and they were right. Indeed, the Cleon of the *Knights* could not in any way be regarded as a typical personification of the leaders of the Athenian democracy. Though comedy had violently attacked Pericles during his lifetime, surely after his death no one could have been induced to recognize him in this hateful and wicked buffoon. The caricature was really too personal to admit of its being given a general application. In creating this character, Aristophanes did not even portray the psychology of an inferior class of demagogues. At best he pointed out with forceful satire, as

was his wont, some of the most patent and characteristic features of the part they played. He has shown us their methods of procedure, their grimaces, their outward appearance, because, without doing so, he could not have put his Cleon upon the stage; but he had not actually studied their souls. It may be that the nature of comedy at that time did not very well admit of this kind of study. Yet there are much more real and human characters than Cleon in plays by the same poet. They are those for which he had a certain sympathy, such as Dicaeopolis, Strepsiades, Lysistrata, Chremylus. Here, hatred and violent prejudice obscure his vision. His conception is a personal vengeance. He is neither able nor willing to see anything but what is hateful in his enemy. His Cleon is a malevolent force, a "Typho" let loose, to use his own words, a monstrous composite of vice and impudence, a sort of mythological monster. He is emphatically not a human being, and for this very reason he cannot really be the personification of a class of real men.

His rival is even less so. While Cleon, at least, is the same from beginning to end of the play, Agoracritos changes incessantly, now outdoing Cleon in vulgarity, in impudence and vileness, but presently appearing as a cautious counsellor, a sagacious critic, a sincere friend of the people, whom he seeks to instruct. Are these transformations of his the cover for the pursuit of some ambitious selfish end? What, in a word, is the object of all his efforts? This is what we must now discover through a study of the *dénouement* and, at the same time, of the rôle of Demos, which latter can only be properly appreciated in the final stage of its development.

V

Agoracritos has supplanted the Paphlagonian; Demos gives him his confidence and puts him in charge of his affairs. What is the result?

Had the poet bodily adopted the ideas of the advocates of the oligarchical theory, and had he developed them dramati-

cally with all their consequences, the rule of Agoracritos would have had to be worse than that of Cleon. Under his influence Demos would have become more capricious, more suspicious, more tyrannical; in a word, more of a dupe than he was previously. And in the exodos Agoracritos would have had to celebrate his ephemeral triumph in a brutal way, even while he had to fear the new rival who, in turn, was destined by fate shortly to oust him by the same methods. Thus conceived, the play would have been logical and quite in conformity with the doctrine of the intransigeant aristocracy. As a matter of fact it is intentionally illogical, even to the point of extreme improbability; and we must seek the reason for this.

In the course of the play Demos has been depicted in general outlines. He is an old rustic,[1] and such he must be, for to the poet's mind he stands for a democracy the best part of which consisted of peasants. But this characteristic, which reappears at the close of the play, seems to be forgotten in the course of the action. His slaves tell us that he has a testy disposition, that he is easily irritated, and somewhat deaf.[2] But of this side of his nature also we witness no manifestation. Indeed, his rôle consists merely in listening to the flattering remarks that are addressed to him, and in accepting the gifts that are offered him. When Cleon speaks of him in his absence, he treats him as an imbecile.[3] In the presence of those who flatter him he does seem to be credulous to the point of silliness. True, he himself warns us not to trust appearances. He says that his outward demeanor hides a very deliberate policy. "I intentionally play the fool; I delight in feasting every day, and that is why I like to nourish a statesman who is a thief; when he is satiated, I catch him and crush him."[4] So this simpleton is in reality a slyboots; at least he persuades himself that he is. But his cleverness is short-sighted, for it does not look beyond an

[1] *Knights*, l. 41: ἄγροικος ὀργήν.

[2] *Knights*, l. 41: ἀκράχολος, δύσκολον γερόντιον, ὑπόκωφον.

[3] *Knights*, l. 396: καὶ τὸ τοῦ δήμου πρόσωπον μακκοᾷ καθήμενον.

[4] *Knights*, ll. 1123-1130.

immediate advantage, which in the long run is to be his perdition. The design he boasts of is not only immoral, but also absurd, based on a false conception of his own real interests, and this is shown by the transformation he undergoes at the close of the play.

Rejuvenated by the magical operation of Agoracritos, he appears handsome and brilliant in the costume of former days, such as he was at the time of Aristides and Miltiades.[1] Thus transformed, he is ashamed of his former self. He cannot understand that he should have allowed himself to be fooled by those who flattered him. How then can we take seriously the clever design of which he boasted before? He recognizes that he had lost his senses, and he blushes at his mistakes.[2] When he puts himself into the hands of his benefactor, Agoracritos, for the future, he commits the management of his affairs not to a shameless politician, but to a wise and disinterested reformer, who is to assure his glory and make him happy.

If this outcome expresses the real thought of Aristophanes, it is clear that this thought is quite different from the intransigeant theory with which it seemed to be mingled at the outset. We have seen that the doctrinaire supporters of oligarchy like pseudo-Xenophon, thought that the Athenian democracy could not be reformed, that it was even destined by its very nature more and more to carry its principles to extremes; and at first it seemed as though the poet had appropriated this idea, when he created the character of Agoracritos. But behold, his character was transformed in its making—his victory, by whatever means secured, had for its immediate result that the democracy, which he had reformed, was entirely changed, and that it mapped out a new destiny for itself. Our entire understanding of Aristophanes' political views depends upon the importance we attach to this *dénouement.*

Is not the temptation great, at first blush, to consider this as a mere bit of cleverness on the part of the poet, who was, above all, anxious to assure the success of his play? One thing

[1] *Knights*, l. 1325: Οἷός περ' Ἀριστείδῃ πρότερον καὶ Μιλτιάδῃ ξυνεσίτει.

[2] *Knights*, ll. 1349, 1354: Αἰσχύνομαί τοι ταῖς πρότερον ἁμαρτίαις.

is certain: if Agoracritos were what he ought to be, the satire would be much more stinging. Can it be maintained that even in this form it would not have been acceptable to the Athenian audience? I do not think so. There was a way for a poet of Aristophanes' ingenuity so to arrange matters that the people would have been amused at this fight to the finish between two equally ambitious rascals. The general thought, obscured by the uproar of a humorous plot, would only have been revealed to a few thoughtful minds, on the day after the victory. In fact, however, the general structure of the play which we are considering, the very details of the closing scene, and finally such other knowledge as we have about Aristophanes—all, in a word, must lead us to believe that its *dénouement* is really a true expression of his belief.

If he had regarded the transformation of Demos merely as a concession to his audience, it ought to have been presented as a humorous fancy, without any relation to the events of the day. Instead of this, we see that it leads to a perfectly concise programme of reforms. Agoracritos virtually subjects his reclaimed master to an examination in which he prescribes his future conduct for him by indirection. "'What will you do if some accuser urges you to sentence a defendant on the pretext that lawsuits and sentences are your chief means of livelihood?' 'I shall hurl him into the abyss.'[1] 'And what other policies will you pursue?' 'I shall give the rowers on our triremes their exact wages, instead of wasting the treasury's money in useless expenses. I shall oblige everybody to serve regularly in the army, not allowing people to escape through intrigue or favor. I shall expel from the Agora the young chaps who indulge in subtle talk, and I shall force them to go ahunting.'" Thereupon Agoracritos assures Demos of a truce of thirty years, and he takes him out to the country, there quietly to enjoy the peace which has thus been restored.[2]

Careful consideration will show us that here we have, under the guise of more or less sketchy and comical suggestions, the

[1] Βάραθρον, the chasm in the ground behind the Acropolis, into which the corpses of criminals, convicted on a capital charge, were thrown.

[2] *Knights*, ll. 1340-1395.

outline of a policy, capable of immediate application, which may be formulated as follows: make peace with Lacedaemonia, reform the education of the young people by taking them out of the schools of the sophists, diminish the importance of oratory by reducing the number of lawsuits, above all stop giving a livelihood to several thousand useless judges; and to this end send the people back to the country, let them once more take up their work, their habits, their peaceful, regular life: in a word, remove them from the baneful influence of the city and from the domination of the politicians.[1]

Let us now compare this policy with that of the men of 411, as we know it from trustworthy documents.[2] Though the two policies may be similar in some particulars, the differences are very much more striking. The chief object of the latter was to shift the centre of gravity of the state and to change the character of the body of the citizens—a real political revolution. The poet aims solely at moral reform. Demos remains himself, or rather he returns to his former self. He needs only open his eyes and allow himself to be enlightened by a good adviser, and regain his strength in a healthy and laborious life in the country. The main cause of his temporary perversion lies not in his own nature, but rather in an initial mistake, a silly and misplaced trustfulness which is itself the result of the confusion caused by the war. Here again we meet the fundamental idea of the *Acharnians*. At heart, Aristophanes is always in sympathy with Dicaeopolis, and he does not dream of robbing him of his rights. But he is not willing that Dicaeopolis should forget his country home and come to live on the Pnyx or in the law-courts. All the trouble appears to him to come from this fatal change of habits, and Cleon, the hateful Cleon, is at once its product and its cause.

This, I believe, is the exact thought of the poet. When we

[1] Aristotle, *Polit.* iv. 62: *Ὅταν μὲν οὖν τὸ γεωργικὸν καὶ τὸ κεκτημένον μετρίαν οὐσίαν κύριον ᾖ τῆς πολιτείας, πολιτεύονται κατὰ νόμους. ἔχουσι γὰρ ἐργαζόμενοι ζῆν, οὐ δύνανται δὲ σχολάζειν, ὥστε τὸν νόμον ἐπιστήσαντες ἐκκλησιάζουσι τὰς ἀναγκαίας ἐκκλησίας.*

[2] Especially through Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, cc. xxix. and xxx.

free it from all extraneous matter, it becomes clear that although in the various stages of its development it may have reflected some of the ideas of the aristocratic opposition, it is by no means an exact rendering of it, and that it did not have the same objects in view. The Athenians made no mistake about it. The judges awarded the first prize in the competition to Aristophanes. After the foregoing explanations, that is not at all surprising. His play, variously interpreted by the several parties, could, in its general tendency, meet with the approval of a large majority. Even those who recognized Cleon as their leader, and who were not inclined to desert him, did not think so well of his character as to take offence at seeing him thus publicly chastised. Indeed, they probably greatly enjoyed watching the maltreatment of this vulgar and imperious man, who had imposed himself upon them, but to whom, after all, they were much pleased to give occasional evidence of their independence.[1] It is possible that the granting of the prize to Aristophanes gave them a twofold satisfaction: that of rewarding the gifted poet and of humilating a disagreeable master.

To-day we interpret matters rather differently. All that was of immediate interest at the time of the performance has lost its importance for us. Many personal allusions either escape us or are hardly noticed. On the other hand, we unwittingly exaggerate the general features which crop up here and there. And perhaps we are right in doing so, for nothing can prevent enduring works from manifesting in an ever-growing degree what is most enduring in them. But when the problem is to gain an exact understanding of the poet's intentions, and to set his work in its former surroundings and time, there is certainly no tendency that needs to be more guarded against than this.

[1] Pseudo-Xenophon, *Polity of the Athenians*, c. xviii.

CHAPTER III

THE CLOUDS. THE WASPS THE PEACE

I

WHAT did Cleon do when he was thus derided? It is very probable, if not certain, that he attempted to take revenge on the poet by making a false accusation against him. The most important anonymous biography of Aristophanes informs us that Cleon brought a suit at law against him for fraudulent use of the title citizen (γραφὴ ξενίας),[1] but through an evident error, as we have seen above, it confuses this accusation with the denunciation before the Senate which followed the production of the *Babylonians*. In fact, it is impossible that the accusation should have been made earlier than 424, for, though the poet recounts at length Cleon's hostile actions, he makes no reference to it whatever either in the *Acharnians* or in the *Knights*. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that it must have followed close upon the success of the latter play.[2]

Without exaggerating the influence of comedy upon public opinion, we must recognize that a work of so much importance, performed before the entire people, was not an indifferent matter. Not only must Cleon have been humiliated and made furious by it, but he may have feared a weakening of his

[1] Proleg. Didot, xi.; reproduced in No. xii., which gives an abridgment of the above, but with the difference that No. xii. puts this accusation after the performance of the *Knights*; cf. Schol. *Acharn.* l. 378.

[2] Gilbert, *Beiträge*, pp. 193-4.

authority by so audacious and well-directed an attack. On the other hand, it was impossible for him to resort once more to a denunciation before the Senate. The first had been unsuccessful; this one would have been even surer to fail. It was an easy matter for the poet to show, book in hand, that Cleon was the sole object of his attacks. The irritated politician resorted to a subterfuge. He brought a charge against Aristophanes of having illegally used the title citizen.

Nothing was more dangerous than such an accusation, for, on the one hand, Athenian citizens, and especially the poorest among them, those who constituted the majority in the law-courts and lived at the expense of the republic, were extremely jealous of their privileges. They dreaded the intruders who had a share in all sorts of salaries. On the other hand, it was always rather difficult to prove one's right to the possession of this enviable title.[1] And when the accuser enjoyed good standing in the law-courts, when he had complaisant witnesses at his disposal, and was sufficiently powerful to intimidate others, when, in fine, he knew how to arrange matters cleverly and to draw up a captious brief, the best-established titles might appear weak. As has already been stated, we do not know how valid Aristophanes' title was. There is no room for doubt that he enjoyed the rank of citizen, and of this Cleon's charge is an unimpeachable proof, as it sought to deprive him of it. But was he quite sure of establishing its entire validity in the face of a very exacting law and of a very distrustful tribunal? Of this we may have our doubts.

The only evidence that we have in this matter is derived

[1] The legal requirement for citizenship was that a man should be the legitimate son of an Athenian citizen and an Athenian woman, and have been inscribed at the age of eighteen on the register of a deme and of a phratry; or else have established a valid claim to a regular naturalization. But the prosecution could maintain that the registration had been wrongfully secured, that the father or the mother was not really an Athenian, or that the defendant was not born in wedlock. As all this had to be proved by the testimony of witnesses and this testimony could always be contested, and as it brought up questions of evidence, there was ample room for sharp practice.

from a passage in the *Wasps*, which is far from clear. In that play, performed two years after the *Knights*, in 422, Aristophanes lets his Coryphaeus say: "There are those who say that I came to terms with Cleon when he attacked me so furiously and harried me and stung me with his calumnies. And while he flayed me, the outsiders looked on and laughed when they heard me cry out lustily. They were quite indifferent to me, curious only to see whether I would say something clever when squeezed and pressed. I noticed this, and *did play the ape a little bit.* Thus, then, the vine-prop proved unfaithful to the vine."[1]

Let us examine this evidence more closely. There is no room for doubt that at a particular moment there was semblance of a truce between Aristophanes and Cleon. This truce cannot have existed previous to the *Knights*; that much is clear from the account above given and from the spirit of the play itself. So it must have been after the year 424. And finally, as we have seen, it was forced upon the poet through fear, when he had been left in the lurch by those on whom doubtless he had relied. We can accordingly surmise with fair accuracy what must have happened.

Accused by Cleon of having usurped the title citizen, Aristophanes did not feel strong enough for a successful defence. His friends, the young knights, were either powerless to help him or did not concern themselves about the danger he was in. The populace, frivolous as ever, enjoyed seeing the fearless satirist tremble, who ordinarily made others tremble, and did not choose to regard him otherwise than as a buffoon, who was obliged to get out of a scrape by aid of jokes. The danger was grave. Had he been condemned, Aristophanes would probably have been subjected to a ruinous fine, expelled from the city, and thus deprived of the right further to occupy himself with public affairs. His prospects as a poet would have been ruined. To what means did he resort to save himself? His own testimony proves beyond doubt that Cleon withdrew his charge, but that he withdrew it only after an apparent settlement had been reached, which, in any case,

[1] *Wasps*, ll. 1284-1291.

could not fail to be very disagreeable to Aristophanes. He found himself obliged to conciliate, by hook or by crook, the man whom he had cruelly offended. Apparently he could not do so without disavowing his intentions, and without, at the same time, treating his own play as a mere piece of buffoonery; and besides, he probably had to agree not to publish it, and to promise that henceforward he would practise more restraint After all, it may be that Cleon too was not entirely sure of his accusation; at all events, he saw a real advantage to himself in this submission of his adversary, who thereby himself destroyed the effect of his comedy—an advantage he would not have secured, had he succeeded in depriving him of the title of citizen. This is no doubt the reason why he withdrew his charge, after having thoroughly frightened Aristophanes, and after having exulted in his humiliation. It may be regarded as certain that the case was not brought to trial, and that Aristophanes was not deprived of the title of citizen.[1]

[1] A contrary opinion is maintained by M. van Leeuwen, *De Aristophane peregrino*, *Mnemosyne*, 1888; cf. edition of the *Wasps*, Proleg. pp. xii. and xxiii. It is based on appearances merely. We do know from precise evidence that several of Aristophanes' plays were performed under borrowed names, but we have no warrant whatever for concluding from this circumstance that he was not entitled to have them played under his own name, because he was a foreigner. In the first place, it is by no means sure that a foreigner did not enjoy the privilege of having comedies performed under his own name; and then, we find poets, who were indisputably Athenians, using borrowed names, just as Aristophanes did. In the year 420 Eupolis had his *Autolycos* performed as the work of Demostratos (Athenaeus, v. 216 D). This custom may be explained by many very simple reasons, which we cannot enlarge upon here, and which must have varied according to the circumstances. As for the other alleged evidence, it has not the meaning that is arbitrarily imputed to it. Moreover, there can be no doubt that if Aristophanes had been deprived of the title citizen, after having once borne it, his rivals and enemies would not have been satisfied to inform us of that fact in obscure allusions. They would have shouted it from the housetops, and the Alexandrian scholars would not have remained ignorant of it. This hypothesis is impossible in itself, and, besides, it is formally contradicted by the passage in the *Wasps*, which is our most trustworthy document in this case.

II

At about the same time, in April, 424, Cleon was chosen general.[1] There is no better proof that the people were far from being guided by the same opinions in the theatre and at the elections.

This election was another triumph for Cleon. Aristophanes could not refrain from showing his annoyance at it. At the close of the year 424 his comedy, the *Clouds*, was written, which seemed to give evidence of his intention temporarily to hold aloof from politics; in it there was no mention of the war nor of the statesmen of the day. But at the last moment, no doubt, just as the comedy was about to be performed, that is shortly before the Dionysia of 423, he inserted into the parabasis (l. 581 *et seq.*) a trenchant allusion to Cleon's election and an appeal to the people to get rid of this "robber," as quickly as possible, by putting his neck in the pillory. He was evidently aware that the danger was over. By withdrawing his charge, Cleon had thrown away his weapons. Besides, being satisfied for the moment with his success, and being busy with quite another matter, he could give but little attention to a sort of insult which had long since lost its sting, because it was so freely used.

Apart from this isolated attack, the *Clouds* contains no trace of political satire.[2] Can we be sure, however, that, while writing this play, the author kept clear of party manœuvres? At any rate this question deserves to be examined.

The substance of the plot is, as we know, a lively attack on Socrates. In it we see a peasant, the worthy Strepsiades, who has run into debt through the fault of his wife and his son. Hard pressed by his creditors, he appeals to the philo-

[1] *Clouds*, l. 581 *et seq.* and the note of J. van Leeuwen. Cf. Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1124.

[2] Süvern's opinion (*Über Aristophanes Wolken*, p. 33 *et seq.*), followed by Gilbert (*Beiträge*, p. 218), that Pheidippides represents Alcibiades, ought, I think, to be entirely discarded, notwithstanding the reference contained in the second argument. There is no definite allusion to lend it the slightest semblance of probability.

sopher, as to the possessor of a wonderful secret, thanks to which one may be relieved of paying one's debts. Socrates, the atheist and sophist, in a trice upsets all the good fellow's moral ideas and religious convictions. But as he is too thick-headed to learn the arts of quibbling himself, he sends his son Pheidippides to school in his stead. The new pupil is too highly gifted, and promptly becomes an impudent boaster and a rebellious son. The father, enlightened at last, sets fire to the school.

The general thought which stands out from this plot is very clear. The poet wished to show how the Athenian character, simple and honest under the influence of tradition, might be changed and even depraved by philosophy and rhetoric. This character he finds here, as elsewhere, in an inhabitant of the country. Strepsiades had remained an honest man, as long as he lived in the fields, on his little farm. In those days he lived happily and even prosperously in his small way, without worries and without ambition, just as his fathers had lived. His first misfortune was an ill-assorted marriage which obliged him to live in the city for the greater part of his time. By this he has jeopardized his fortune and contracted debts, and so become subject to the temptations of sophistry, which corrupts him at least temporarily. And though its fatal influence does not last with the father, whose better nature promptly gains the upper hand, there is every reason to believe that it will endure with the son, of whom it makes a perfect rascal.

This is about the same idea that had inspired the poet's first play, the *Banqueters,* only he seems here to have embodied it in a stronger plot, and so to have given it greater importance. Was it of aristocratic origin ? A certain number of old families, who clung to the past, must certainly have been in favor of it since the middle of the century. But why should not the rural democracy, very tenacious, as it was, of its moral and religious convictions, and rather uncharitable toward everything that came from elsewhere, have been equally in favor of it ? At all events, in Aristophanes' day the militant aristocracy were far from accepting it ; on the contrary, they were,

without doubt, the strongest supporters of sophistry. It was they who welcomed the sophists, who paid for their teaching, who supplied them with the patronage they needed. Their leading theorists, men like Antiphon, Theramenes, and Critias, were among those who were attracted by the new culture. It was among the upper classes that the adepts in rhetoric were chiefly to be found, as well as the great wits and the dialecticians who inquired into the why and wherefore of things, at the risk of overthrowing and destroying religious and social beliefs. The disciples of Socrates were regarded as enemies of democracy.[1] Several of them belonged by birth to the best families of Athens, and so it may be regarded as quite certain that when Aristophanes wrote his *Clouds*, he did not make himself the mouthpiece of those whom he had taken as allies, the year before, in the *Knights*.

In his play, it is true, Aristophanes has in no way brought out, or even indicated, this aristocratic side of sophistry in general, and in the Socratic school in particular. It is hard to say whether he would have found any advantage in doing so, for, while he might have flattered certain popular feelings, he would have run the risk of offending some of his friends. But, in fact, there is no evidence that he had a very clear appreciation of this phase of sophistry. It admitted many fine distinctions, which a contemporary would apprehend only with difficulty.

Though sophistical teachings, in the proper sense of the word, like those of Protagoras, Prodicus, Gorgias, and a few others, found favor chiefly among the aristocracy, it must be admitted that they tended directly to ruin the principles without which it could not exist. The influence of an aristocracy necessarily depends upon an instinctive respect for tradition. Whatever weakens this respect is a direct menace to it—a very evident truth to our minds, of which, however, the ambitious oligarchs of the fifth century do not seem to have had the slightest conception. They did perceive that dialectics and rhetoric afforded them effective means of persuasion in the

[1] Plato, *Apology*, c. x. and especially c. xxi. . . . *τούτων* . . . , *οὓς οἱ διαβάλλοντές μέ φασιν ἐμοὺς μαθητὰς εἶναι.*

law-courts and political gatherings. That sufficed to delude them. Engrossed in their immediate success, they did not dream of the latent influence which the new rationalism could not fail to exert on the mentality of the people, to the detriment of their own former social standing. Besides, they were themselves saturated with the new philosophy. They were utilitarians and positivists in their way of thinking, and had lost faith in their hereditary rôle and in all that could serve to ennoble it. The majority of them regarded their political power as an individual satisfaction, as a means of enjoyment, and not as a conservative social force, transmitted from generation to generation, for the common weal of the city. Had the poet really cared for the interests of the aristocracy, so far as they were connected with the interests of society, or had any of his patrons made them clear to him, he ought to have tried to open the eyes of his fellow-citizens to this serious and really fatal error. And then he would have had to represent, not a good fellow from the country, as the victim of the sophists, but rather the descendant of some great family, as seduced by them, and undermining the moral inheritance of his race through selfish ambition. Such was indeed the most serious and portentous social phenomenon that could attract the attention of an observer at that time. Aristophanes does not seem to have had an inkling of it, and if some of those with whom he associated saw it or suspected it, he did not, in any sense, constitute himself their spokesman.

As for Socrates, if Aristophanes had known him well, and if he had been devoted to the interests of the aristocracy, everybody agrees to-day that, instead of combating him, he ought to have considered him his strongest ally. In a society which, more and more, felt the need of reasoning, Socrates' task consisted in endeavoring to re-establish by logic what logic had first upset—namely, precisely that which the comedy defended. This task Aristophanes misunderstood completely.

But we must observe that this misunderstanding was certainly not due to his aristocratic surroundings, which have sometimes been thought to have had a strong influence upon him. The prejudices which appear in his comedy must have

prevailed much more among the common people than among the intellectual elite of Athenian society. Of course, it is possible that in those days the aristocratic tendencies of Socrates' ideas were not so clearly discerned as at a somewhat later time, when, among many others, he won over Xenophon and the sons of Ariston. The philosopher himself, sprung from the people, whose manners and habits he pretended to retain, probably did not, at that time, or possibly at any time, think that he was an opponent of democracy. But, whatever he may have thought about it, he was such, on account of his profound way of thinking, which considered capacity as the condition of power, and recognized no right that was not accompanied by the ability necessary for its exercise. He made no attempt to disguise this tendency in his talks,[1] and it had no small share in giving rise to opinions unfavorable to him. He must have had enemies in every class of society, but it was certainly among the people that he called forth most distrust and hostility. His trial clearly showed this, and nothing was really more natural.

Let me recall his conversation with Charmides in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. The noble and wealthy Charmides keeps aloof from public affairs, owing to an unconquerable sense of shyness. What does Socrates do in his attempt to reassure him and to encourage him to take a more active part? He shows him what the Athenian people are: a mass of artisans, masons, cobblers and fullers, ignorant and vulgar. Should such judges frighten an educated man? The theme is appropriate to the circumstances, but it is not an accidental one; in it Socrates expresses his inmost conviction—to his mind proper conduct was always conditioned on knowledge, and he spent his life in making people see that they did not understand the A B C of things in which they presumed to interfere.[2]

At best, only cultivated minds could comprehend this, and there is much evidence to show that the most intelligent men

[1] Plato, *Apology*, c. xviii. p. 30 E.

[2] Plato, *Apology*, cc. vi.-viii. The last chapter shows that Socrates, after having made famous statesmen, poets, or artists recognize their ignorance, did not meet with less infatuation or presumptuous folly among the artisans.

came back to him, and became subject to his influence, after having at first been annoyed by his teachings. In spite of their vexation, the lofty quality of his intellectual and moral nature could not entirely escape them, and in the circles in which a degree of mental activity prevailed, a very strong recognition of his superiority became general. But among the common people nothing of the kind took place. To them his curious appearance, his peculiar manners, his ironical and indiscreet questions, and finally, his offensive candor, must have made him appear like an ill-natured fanatic. People naturally classed him with the sophists, because, like them, he busied himself with subtle matters and, like them, discussed all sorts of subjects. They credited him with ideas that were vaguely attributed to all of them indiscriminately, made him out an atheist and a dangerous dialectician, because he thought he had a right to subject all beliefs and all doubts to the closest scrutiny; and they, no doubt, hated him much more than other philosophers just because he took issue with everybody, instead of confining himself to a circle of chosen disciples.

It is probable that Aristophanes adopted this popular opinion, and that he constructed the character in his play according to it. If he was the interpreter of borrowed views when he constructed it as he did, he certainly borrowed them rather from the prejudices of the democracy than from those of the aristocracy. It is most likely, however, that he asked nobody for inspiration. Socrates must have been antipathetic to him. The philosopher did not refuse to join in playful conversation, but he had a thinker's contempt for whatever seemed to him like buffoonery. Xenophon gives us proof of this in his *Symposium*. It is more than likely that in this regard he made no distinction between legitimate comedy and the jests of professional buffoons. Everything in this strange style must have offended him—the vulgar caricatures, the lack of dignity, the unfair severity of the satire; and he was not the man to disguise his thoughts. Of course, the fiction of Plato's *Symposium* does not suffice to establish that Aristophanes ever met Socrates, nor that he had direct dealings with him. It must, however, be admitted that this is, to say the least,

very probable. At all events, the philosopher's opinions only to be reported to the poet in order to call forth a certain animosity against him. And how could they have failed to be reported in a society of idlers who spent their time in chatting? But these personal grievances, if they existed at all, grew to be of such importance, merely because they coincided with Aristophanes' more general and profounder views, upon which they acted like leaven.

The poet hated the very name of philosophy, and thought it detestable. He thought that it not only cast a gloom over happy and energetic Athens, but also perverted it. Through it the young people grew morose and pale, studied a thousand useless things, instead of gaily taking part in active life. Through it, furthermore, they learned to doubt or to abjure the traditional principles of life, and became babblers and dialecticians. It seemed to him that the very safeguards of domestic and public morality were being lost, little by little, in this disquieting transformation. Of course there is no use in demonstrating here what elements of exaggeration there were in these views, and, above all, how they erred in failing to take into account the most apparent demands of the changes which were taking place at that period. But, on the other hand, it would be very thoughtless not to recognize the amount of correct observation and of truth that they contained. Aristophanes felt that he was witnessing a profound crisis. His mind was neither broad enough nor deliberate enough to inquire whether it was inevitable. He did see that it was dangerous for Athens, that it would probably result in impairing her virtue, in the broadest sense of the word; and one can hardly say that he was mistaken.

The *Clouds* was not a success,[1] and at this Aristophanes was both surprised and hurt. It seemed to him, and not without reason, that he had never written anything better; and it would certainly have been difficult to clothe so serious a thought in a series of more amusing conceits. Regarded as a work of art, his play gave evidence of a really new species of composition. In its fundamental idea it touched upon the

[1] Argument v.

most important question of the time. He remodelled his play, more or less completely, with the intention of producing it once more. This is shown by the first part of the existing parabasis, which was written with a view to this second performance.[1] This performance seems not to have taken place; but the poet, no doubt, persisted in his view, and posterity has agreed with him.

What was the cause of this failure? One would be rather simple-minded to seek it, as some have done, in a sense of justice on the part of the Athenian people, who were disgusted by the way in which the poet treated Socrates. Plato's *Apology* would prove, if there were need, that this was not the case. It declares formally that Aristophanes' comedy contributed to Socrates' unpopularity, and this obliges us to believe that it did not call forth any protest of the sort mentioned from the people. We may even infer from this evidence that the comedy produced its effect, slowly, but surely. It is, therefore, probable that it was published, and that, in default of an audience, it found many readers. Moreover, the silence of the scholiasts does not prevent us from assuming that it may have had a second performance, either at Piraeus, or in the suburbs of the city, or on the rustic stage of some deme. Such a performance would not leave any trace in literary history. However this may be, the fact of his failure in the official competition of 423 stands on record; but it can be explained only on purely literary grounds. Accustomed as we are to legitimate comedy, Aristophanes' play appears very amusing to us; and so it is when read. The Athenian audience must have thought it dreary and severe. The chorus was not at all funny or gay, there was no absurd dance, no jostling, no extravagant gambols and contortions. While watching it, the audience had not been convulsed with that irresistible laughter which seemed to

[1] The statements contained in Arguments v. and vii. regarding the remodelling of the play have given rise to considerable controversy. See J. van Leeuwen, ed. of the *Clouds*, Prolegomena, p. ix, and p. 6 note 2. But nobody denies, or can deny, that the first part of the parabasis was added subsequently.

them to be the chief essential of a good comedy. The judges were actuated by the common opinion when they preferred the *Bottle* by Cratinus and the *Connos* by Ameipsias.

III

The failure of the *Clouds* probably had much to do with a renewal of Aristophanes' hostility to Cleon. Hitherto he had succeeded best in political comedies. He decided to return to them at whatever risk, and he could not return to them without attacking Cleon directly or indirectly.

It is chiefly Cleon, indeed, among the demagogues that is again made the butt of his satire in the comedy of the *Wasps*, performed at the Lenaea of the year 422, and consequently written at the close of the year 423. It is well known that the play seeks to point out what may be called the corruption of the judicial system at Athens. The principle itself of this system is not attacked, but rather the changes in this principle, wrought by the politicians of the advanced democracy. That is the reason why the person in whom this corruption is incarnated is called the "friend of Cleon" (Philocleon), whereas his son, who wishes to reform him, is called the "enemy of Cleon" (Bdelycleon).

Here, as before, it behoves us to get a clear view of the fundamental idea of the play, in order to determine accurately the nature of Aristophanes' opposition and its relation to the theories of the time.

We know how far the organization of the Athenian law-courts in the fifth century conformed to the highest conception of democracy.[1] Every citizen who was at least thirty years of age was entitled to act as judge, and there were no other judges, save in exceptional cases. Together they constituted what was known as the Ἡλιαία, and in their quality as judges they were called *heliasts*. Lots were drawn among the heliasts to determine which of them were to sit in each court. Thus

[1] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, c. lxiii.; Schoemann-Lipsius, *Griech. Alterthümer*, i. p. 506.

these courts were actually juries, often very numerous, easily swayed, as passionate as all assemblies, and entirely lacking in legal knowledge. The heliasts who were chosen to sit received compensation from the state, which Cleon had recently caused to be increased to three obols, in order to make himself popular[1]—surely a moderate sum, but one that probably, at that time, sufficed to support a family for a day. One can readily understand that wealthy citizens, men of affairs, active and busy artisans, little cared to lose their time, listening to the pettifogging of lawyers, for so meagre a compensation. But small tradesmen, the poor, the lazy, as well as aged or idle artisans, there found a very convenient means of earning a living. And so it was they who eagerly attended the drawing of names, while the others stayed away, thanks to the laxity of law or custom.

Courts thus constituted could not fail to be permeated with all the prejudices and all the passions of the lower classes. They were suspicious and severe toward the rich, tyrannical toward the allies, ever ready to listen to the denunciator, full of sympathy for professional accusers who, by increasing the number of lawsuits, secured the judges an opportunity to sit. Trials were actually their daily bread, and the demagogues were well aware of this, and had no greater means of influence than the frequency with which charges were brought. Radical politicians on the Pnyx, they became sycophants in the courts: these were, in a way, the two phases of one and the same rôle, or rather the two halves of one and the same whole.

Such law-courts could not fail to be an object of fear and at the same time of ridicule to the citizen of the upper classes. When Charmides, in Xenophon's *Banquet*, congratulates himself on having become poor, he says that one of the chief advantages he has derived from his ruin is that he is rid of the sycophants.[2] Fear of denunciation must indeed have been a constant anguish for people who knew what sort of judges they would have to appear before in case they were accused. The aristocratic doctrinaire who wrote the treatise on the *Polity of the Athenians*, quoted above, has but one sentence

[1] Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 187.

[2] Xenophon, *Banquet*, iv. 30.

about the courts, but it is a cruel arraignment: "As for the law-courts, the people bring to them thoughts, not of justice, but of their personal interests."[1] Such was the accepted opinion in the circles from which this book issued.

Did this opinion find expression in a programme of reforms? There can be no doubt that it did. The doctrine of the moderate aristocracy, or even of the conservative democracy, necessarily tended at least toward a modification of the personnel of the courts. Aristotle suggests, as one means of escaping the evils that have just been pointed out, a law obliging every citizen to sit as judge when he is drawn by lot, and imposing fines proportionate to their fortunes on those who remain away, with exemption for the poor. In this wise, he says, the wealthy are forced to sit, while freedom of choice is given to the poor.[2] He also informs us that this was a provision in the laws of Charondas, so that it went back beyond the fifth century. No doubt it was known and admired by those at Athens who desired to reform the republic; besides, it could be made to agree perfectly with the letter, at least, of existing institutions, if not with their spirit. The oligarchy, properly speaking, went still further. We do not know precisely what disposition the revolution of the year 411 made of the courts, but perhaps the most important principle by which it was inspired was that all public offices should be without salaries.[3] There is every reason to believe that it did not propose to except the salary of the judges. A few years later, at all events, the oligarchical government of 404, even during the time when it was relatively moderate, took great care to break the power of the courts.[4] We may be sure that in doing so it merely put into operation a programme which had long since been elaborated in the hetairies.

Therefore, the question for us to solve is whether this programme, which had certainly been discussed since 422,

[1] Ps.-Xenophon, *Polity of the Athenians*, i. 5. xiii.

[2] Aristotle, *Politics*, iv. 13. 2, Bergk.

[3] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 29. 5: *τὰς δ'ἀρχὰς ἀμίσθους ἄρχειν ἁπάσας.*

[4] *Ibid.* 35. 2: *καὶ τὸ κῦρος ὃ ἦν ἐν τοῖς δικασταῖς κατέλυσαν.*

had any influence on Aristophanes' comedy, and whether he ought, to a certain extent, to be regarded as the interpreter of the views of a party, with whom we have already found him holding relations, but relations of an independent kind.

The prologue of the *Wasps* shows us the aged Philocleon, closely watched in his house by his son Bdelycleon and by his slaves, who wish, at all costs, to prevent him from going to sit as a judge. Why do they prevent him? Solely for his good. His mania for being a judge is characterized as a "strange malady" (l. 71), which Bdelycleon wishes to cure at any cost. From the description given us of this malady (ll. 87-135), we do indeed recognize that it was real insanity, and painful at that. Racine has translated a considerable part of this description in his *Plaideurs*. Philocleon cannot sleep, or, when he does succumb to fatigue for a moment, his sleep is disturbed by dreams that refer to the law-court. This mania turns into malice—he condemns everybody. At the same time, it leads him to commit countless extravagances. His son is sincerely grieved by it,—he has tried to argue with him, but to no purpose. Then he puts him into the hands of the Corybantes, but still without success. He has made him lie down in the temple of Asclepius, and this does no good either. Finally, he has had to lock him up in his house and carefully close all the doors. Such is the opening scene, and, as we see, it is not the higher interests of justice that are at stake; it is the personal interests of Philocleon, but of Philocleon considered as the representative of a whole class of Athenians.

We may pass over his attempts to escape; they are mere tomfoolery. And now comes the entrance of the chorus. This chorus consists of aged heliasts, who are on their way to court before daybreak. Cleon has advised them to bring a supply of anger because they are to sit in judgment on the general Laches, whom he has accused of embezzlement and corruption after his campaign in Sicily (ll. 240-245). Evidently the poet is anxious to expose this sort of agreement or tacit understanding between the demagogues and the heliasts. He is their purveyor, but they obey him. The

politician feeds the judges, the judges do the bidding of the politician.

These heliasts wonder at Philocleon's delay. Is he ill? Does he not know that grave matters are to be dealt with? While asking one another such questions as these, they get on as fast as they can; for if, by chance, the archon fails to put their names into the ballot box, what are they to live on? Philocleon hears them, calls them and explains how and why he is held captive. And they urge him to escape. We see him gnawing at the meshes of the net, stretched across one of his windows; he slips through the gap. Is he free? No, Bdelycleon has heard him. The watchers come running —the fugitive is seized and beaten. The old men utter cries, they make threats of informing their protector, Cleon. Bdelycleon keeps his temper and implores them to hear his reasons. At first they refuse to do so, shout and cry tyranny; then they calm themselves little by little, and finally permit him to speak to them.

As may be conjectured, this is the principal scene, or, at all events, the one that is most important for the argument. And what precisely is the purpose of this argument? Before entering into it, Bdelycleon concisely defines its import. What he wishes to prove is that his father is mistaken in thinking that the office of heliast secures him any advantage, whereas, in fact, it makes him "the slave of the demagogue" (ll. 504-507; 514-517). As before, the selfish interests of the judge are the real and chief object of the argument, and yet, back of these interests, still another matter may be discerned, and this is the question of the independence of justice and consequently of its value.

Philocleon is the first to speak, and to show all the advantages he owes to the ἡλιαία, and naturally enough, the audience would regard his speech as a very lively and amusing satire on the Athenian judge. To begin with, this judge is a sort of king, a king who has, as his courtiers and flatterers, all the accused, however important they may be. We may point out that this thought is also met with in the treatise of pseudo-Xenophon on the *Polity of the Athenians*, which has been

repeatedly quoted.[1] It is therefore likely that it was current in the aristocratic circles, from whom Aristophanes may well have borrowed it. But, at best, it is nothing more than a mocking characterization of no great consequence. The same may be said of almost everything that Philocleon says. He gives us a detailed picture of what may be called the comedy of the courts—the tears of the defendants, the appeals of parents and friends, the introduction of small children and wives, all means by which attempts are made either to soften the heart of the judge, or to enliven him, or to seduce him. An actor recites verses, a flute-player plays the flute; the judge listens, enjoys himself and decides as suits him, for he is responsible to nobody (l. 587). Moreover, his power extends beyond the law-court. In the assembly also the politicians make themselves popular by promising the heliasts more pay and less work (ll. 592-602).

In a word, if this satire, which is so pleasantly hidden beneath apparent praise, has a serious meaning, it lies in two things. In the first place, it gives us a clear understanding of the psychology of the heliast, and so explains with great spirit and insight why the small tradesmen of Athens found so much pleasure in acting as judges, and why honest folk as they were in everyday life, they became thoroughly perverse in the law-courts. In the second place, it reinforces a suggestion to which allusion is made above, by showing us the politicians absorbed in pleasing the judges. Apart from this, there is only one serious word to be noted, namely the "irresponsible," uttered quite casually. Already in the *Knights* the people had been called a "tyrant," that is to say, an absolute ruler. The same idea is here applied to the ἡλιαία, but with much less insistence and forcefulness.

When Philocleon has finished his argument, Bdelycleon replies to him. Aristophanes has given him the task of thoroughly exposing "the old canker that has taken root in the republic" (l. 651). It looks as if he wished to refute his father's brief, point by point; he really does nothing of the

[1] Pseudo-Xenophon, *Polity of the Athenians*, i. 18. The similarity is noticed in the edition of J. van Leeuwen.

sort. What is the use of refuting an argument which is, in itself, the best satire on him who makes it? What he does refute is the fundamental error which is at the root of Philocleon's reasoning. The latter has declared that he is convinced that the practice of justice redounds to his personal benefit. Bdelycleon shows clearly that it redounds to the benefit of certain politicians. As public accusers, and owing to their popularity, the latter make the tributary cities and the most highly respected citizens in those cities tremble; for it rests with them to secure the sentence of whomsoever they desire. And thus these politicians, being masters of the courts, which depend on their zeal for their existence, sell their favor, or else their silence; and while they get rich by such means, the small fry, the horde of judges who look to them for their daily pay, obey them servilely. In theory, the democracy is sovereign; in reality, it is in the hands of its masters.

As always in comedy, certain fanciful elements are added to this forceful and serious argument. Bdelycleon pretends to accept the principle of the demagogues, namely, that the money of the tributary cities ought to be used to feed the sovereign people, which, according to him, has no other function than to rule and to judge. They proclaim this principle when it suits them; but do they put it into effect when they have the government in their hands? A simple calculation proves that this money, thus used, would suffice to support twenty thousand Athenian citizens. But the bulk of it does not reach the people—it remains in the hands of the politicians and their friends. Fancies aside, Bdelycleon's figuring remains as an amusing satire at least, well suited by its very absurdity to expose the lie from which the demagogues draw their strength.

The rest is known, and we need not recall it in detail here. The aged heliasts are enlightened by this instructive debate; they forswear their errors, that is to say, their confiding admiration for Cleon and his ilk. Philocleon sees clearly that his son is right, but in his heart habit is stronger than reason. He loves to be a judge, he cannot get on without being a judge.

In order to satisfy him, a law-court has to be installed in his house, and a domestic trial has to be held in it. It is the trial of the dog Labes, so well known to us through Racine's imitation of it in his *Plaideurs*. The historical allusions in the original text add nothing to the general purpose of the play. The last act rather disconcerts us. Bdelycleon, who has, no doubt, become rich by working while his father was acting as judge, wishes him to live in idleness and pleasure henceforth.[1] He takes his father out into society, after having made a futile attempt to teach him good manners. There the old maniac gets atrociously drunk and gets into all sorts of scrapes. We see him come back reeling and singing, chased by the people whom he has jostled or insulted; and the play ends with a grotesque dance, in which he joins some professional dancers whom he has challenged. At this late day it seems to us that this transformation did not improve him. But in the first place, we must, no doubt, take into account the requirements of the style to which Aristophanes thought himself obliged to conform—it was necessary to conclude the play with a show that would amuse the people. And besides, this ending, with its comic exaggeration, gives us a good picture of the Athenian people returning to their normal ways. They were an amiable race, cheerful, of kindly and benevolent disposition, of easy manners, unschooled by severe discipline, without harshness—such, in a word, as Thucydides has described them in the famous speech which he attributes to Pericles; and in the play we have seen them unnaturally corrupted by the influence of the demagogues, when they had once yielded to the mania of sitting as judges and passing sentence.

In order to appreciate this comedy as a political satire, one must really pay special attention to the middle part, which, so to speak, contains its entire lesson. And what is its drift? We now see clearly that the poet has no thought whatever of

[1] The play does not make it quite clear why Philocleon is poor, while his son Bdelycleon seems to be very well off. This difference in their state was necessary for the comedy. The real heliast was poor. On the other hand, it was necessary that Bdelycleon should not be poor, in order that he might assure his father of a comfortable livelihood when once he was cured. It is a pity that the play fails to explain how Bdelycleon became wealthy.

a thorough-going reform of the judicial system, on the lines of one of the programmes above stated. There is nothing in his play to suggest the idea that it would be well to reduce the number of judges, or to exclude the lower classes from the courts, or to use coercive measures against those who neglected to appear there. He ridicules the credulous confidence of the people in their regular leaders and the generally accepted notion that their zeal as denunciators was for the public good. Were we to seek to derive some practical advice to his fellow citizens from his play, it might, perhaps, be formulated thus: "Athenians, you may be sure that you have no real interest in this heaping-up of lawsuits instigated by the politicians. It is for their own benefit that they bring them and not for yours. Do not, therefore, encourage their denunciatory zeal by your propensity to condemn. On the contrary, reduce the number of lawsuits by discouraging the accusers, and, at the same time, refuse the support furnished by the judge's pay; return to your normal ways of life, to your business and to your pleasures. This would make Athens more prosperous and a more agreeable place to live in."

Thus conceived, the comedy of the *Wasps* may be regarded as the concluding part of a sort of satirical tetralogy, whose real unity now becomes clear. In 426, in the *Babylonians*, Aristophanes had pictured the demagogues oppressing the allied cities, and making Athens disliked elsewhere. In 425, in the *Acharnians*, he did not directly denounce them, but Pericles, from whom they took their lead, as the real instigator of a fruitless war, that was rending Greece and ruining Athens, but that was making them rich; in 424, in the *Knights*, he attacked the very foundation of their power, namely their flattery, which had become a principle of government; and finally in 422, in the *Wasps*, he exposed one of their most effective and, at the same time, most dangerous means of influence—their specious zeal as denunciators, which tended to corrupt the Athenian character, because it transformed a people, naturally kind-hearted, humane and cheerful, into a body of suspicious, selfish and ill-natured judges.

Thus, the same spirit animated Aristophanes from beginning

to end; nowhere did he appear as the enemy of democracy. No doubt, he had had friendly relations with its opponents, and had even borrowed some of their ideas, but the fundamental tendency of his political views differed essentially from theirs. They sought to destroy the democracy; he appears merely to have sought to forewarn and, if possible, to reform it.

IV

In the very year in which Aristophanes had produced his *Wasps*, and only a few months after its performance, in the summer of 422, Cleon fell under the walls of Amphipolis in Thrace.[1] His death assured the temporary preponderance of the moderate peace-party, of which Nicias was then the leader; and in the following year peace between Athens and Sparta was finally concluded, after ten years of war.

Aristophanes wrote and produced his comedy entitled *The Peace* during the days just preceding the treaty, at a moment when the outcome of the negotiations was no longer doubtful.[2] Thucydides portrays with his usual precision the feelings that prevailed in Athens during the negotiations: "At that time the Athenians desired peace (*πρὸς τὴν εἰρήνην μᾶλλον τὴν γνώμην εἶχον*), for, after their recent defeat at Delium, and again at Amphipolis, they no longer had that confidence in themselves which had previously kept them from accepting all offers of compromise so long as present success made them believe in their decided superiority. Besides, they feared lest their allies, encouraged by their failures, might fall away from them more and more, and they regretted not having made a treaty after the expedition to Pylus, when the occasion was favorable."[3] This analysis is manifestly correct, but it does

[1] Thucydides, v. 10.

[2] Argument No. 1 merely gives the year. The allusions to political events, contained in the play, establish its relation to them in point of time. Peace was declared immediately after the city Dionysia, for it is from this festival that Thucydides dates back in counting the ten years which the war lasted, v. 20.

[3] Thucydides, v. 14.

not give us a sufficient idea of the heartfelt delight with which the rural population of Attica beheld the return of happy and tranquil days. And this is just what Aristophanes has pictured with marvelous fidelity. This treaty fulfilled all the poet's hopes; nobody had wished for peace more ardently and more sincerely than he; nobody could have welcomed it with sincerer joy. As a consequence his play is noticeable for its exalted lyrical character. Through it there resounds, as it were, the triumph of the rural democracy, which was at last getting what it then longed for above all else.

The plot is altogether allegorical and does not amount to much. Trygaeus, a vine-dresser and owner of a small farm, is exasperated by the prolongation of the war, just as Dicaeopolis had been previously. He scales Olympus on his dung-beetle, and there, with Hermes as his accomplice, and with the help of the sturdy peasants who constitute the chorus, he hoists Peace out of a cave in which war had confined her. Thereupon, when he has once more put her in possession of her authority, he descends to earth, bringing with him his amiable companions, Opora, the goddess of fruits, and Theoria, the goddess of festivals. Once back in his deme Athmonon, he marries Opora, and joyfully celebrates his wedding with the help of the chorus. During these festivities he proudly assumes the rôle of the liberator of the demes and of the country folk, whose victory over the politicians he celebrates.[1]

From the special point of view of this study, our chief interest in the exuberant joy of this victory centres about the retrospective judgment which Aristophanes passes on Cleon and on the policy of the demagogues.

At the very outset, in the parabasis (l. 749 *et seq.*) he proudly recalls the fight he has made against him, brags about its audaciousness and magnificence, and represents it as an innovation which transformed comedy. It may be that he

[1] *Peace*, l. 919:

πολλῶν γὰρ ὑμῖν ἄξιος,
Τρυγαῖος Ἀθμονεὺς ἐγώ,
δεινῶν ἀπαλλάξας πόνων
τὸν δημότην
καὶ τὸν γεωργικὸν λεών
Ὑπέρβολόν τε παύσας.

exaggerates his deserts, but not to such an extent as entirely to pervert the truth of the matter. It is quite certain that others, before him, had made a fight against the men in question, and that they had created political comedy, but the continuity of his attacks, their variety and their close connection with one another, and the significance of some of them, had in fact lent his manner of fighting something unusual and novel. Cratinus, Hermippus and Telecleides may have hurled some trenchant shafts at Pericles; it does not appear, however, that they attacked the very principle of his government. But, in his fight against Cleon, Aristophanes had exposed some of the serious vices of the demagogy of his day.

Of this he was well aware; and this is why, in the *Peace*, he forcefully reminds us of some of the lofty moral considerations that had made him hate the war. He had considered this war as anti-Hellenic, as having been begun and prolonged for the selfish interests of a few men. To his mind, Cleon was the pestle with which the war brayed the Greek cities in its mortar.[1] And so the restoration of peace becomes a veritable festival of Hellenic brotherhood and deserves to be celebrated in hymns of joy.[2] "See," exclaims Hermes, "how the reconciled cities greet one another and how they laugh for joy!"[3]

But there is more to the story. The war had altered the character of Athens; when it took the rural democracy from the farms, it gave them vicious and servile habits. The same god says: "When the laboring folk had abandoned their fields and flocked into town, they did not see that they were being sold for gain. As they no longer had olives to eat, and as they were fond of figs, they had no choice but to turn to the orators, who, knowing full well that the poor devils were powerless as long as they had nothing to eat, kept shouting and driving Peace away, who nevertheless showed her face

[1] *Peace*, l. 269: ἀπόλωλ' Ἀθηναίοις ἀλετρίβανος
ὁ βυρσοπώλης, ὃς ἐκύκα τὴν Ἑλλάδα.

[2] *Ibid.* l. 291: ὡς ἥδομαι καὶ τέρπομαι καὶ χαίρομαι.
νῦν ἐστὶν ἡμῖν, ὦνδρες Ἕλληνες, καλόν . . . κ.τ.ἐ.

[3] *Ibid.* l. 538: ἴθι νυν, ἄθρει,
οἷον πρὸς ἀλλήλας λαλοῦσιν οἱ πόλεις
διαλλαγεῖσαι καὶ γελῶσιν ἄσμεναι.

again and again, because she longed for this land. At the same time, they harassed those of the allies who were fat and rich, first accusing one of them and then another of sympathy with Brasidas. And then you would tear the unlucky one to pieces, like a pack of hounds, for the city sat pale and terrified, and eagerly devoured all calumnies that were cast to her. Then, when the aliens saw what blows the accusers could deal, they shut their mouths by stuffing them with gold; and thus the accusers grew rich, but Greece was on the road to ruin without your knowing it. Now the man to blame for this was a tanner."[1]

What the god says with trenchant and vigorous eloquence is confirmed by the chorus of peasants, who explain how peace has brought them back to their former habits. "I shall no longer be seen to be an irritable, ill-natured judge; I shall no longer seem severe and harsh, as I did formerly; but you will see me good-natured and tender-hearted, because I am free from worry."[2]

Nothing could better bring out the true nature of Aristophanes' thought. In Cleon, he had furiously persecuted a corruptor of Athenian spirit, and he believed, somewhat ingenuously perhaps, that, thanks to the peace and to Cleon's death, it would be restored to its former vigor.

Aristophanes seems to have been appeased as soon as he was rid of his enemy, as we shall see in the chapters which follow. And so we may say that his hostility to Cleon is the characteristic mark of one period of his life.

During this period he appears violent, bitter, and even unjust, if one may speak of justice with respect to a style of composition whose very nature tends to distort whatever it deals with. Engaged in a passionate combat, in which the most serious moral and political ideas were at stake, he occasionally sided with the various parties of the opposition and may have profited by their encouragement; but it is now clear, from the foregoing study of the subject, that he never entered their service, and that he was, in no sense of the word, a party-man. Two sentiments above all inspired him,

[1] *Peace*, ll. 631-647. [2] *Ibid.* l. 349.

both of which had to do with his antecedents and social rank and very nature—a Hellenic sentiment and an Athenian sentiment. He could never admit either that the Greeks should engage in internecine war or that the Athenian people should allow their kindly, amiable, and sprightly natures to be spoiled by selfish demagogues. His opposition was not always loyal, but at bottom it remained sincere and generous, and it was far-seeing as well. There was no political platform, properly speaking, back of his plays, but only a few hasty and incomplete outlines; as a consequence, we cannot, at this late day, extract a precise doctrine from them. And yet, beneath their levity they conceal a sort of general philosophy, which still retains its value and even its application.

CHAPTER IV

SECOND PERIOD

THE SICILIAN AND DECELEIAN WARS

THE BIRDS, 414. LYSISTRATA AND THESMOPHORIAZUSAE, 411. THE FROGS, 405.

I

THE chronological continuity of the extant plays of Aristophanes is interrupted after the *Peace* (421); it begins again with the *Birds* (414), followed by the *Lysistrata* and the *Thesmophoriazusae* (411), and then, after an interval of six years, by the *Frogs* (405). Together, these four plays make a second group, quite different from the first, in several respects, but particularly when regarded from the special point of view of this study.

Indeed, it appears that between 421 and 415, Aristophanes experienced a certain change of mind as regards politics. And first, it must be observed that in his earlier plays he had exhausted the chief objects of satire that the Athenian democracy could afford him. There was no longer reason why he should devote his attention and his inventive genius so persistently to ideas of this kind. In the second place, Cleon had fallen in 422. His death had rid the poet of a formidable enemy, and had removed from the scene the man in whom he saw concentrated all the vices and malignant influences which menaced the city at that time. His mind,

which was by nature elastic and quick to relax, must have been somewhat restored to serenity thereby. Indeed, such a disposition manifests itself in the passage he substituted, probably in the year 418, for the original anapaests of which the first part of the parabasis of the *Clouds* must have consisted, when it was performed in 423.[1] In this passage he declares that he did not wish to trample upon his enemy's corpse, and blames his rivals, Eupolis and Hermippus among others, for the bitterness they show toward Hyperbolus.[2] As a contrast to such vulgar violence, he offers the style of composition shown in his *Clouds*, a play for which he seems to show a deliberate preference, as a type of a comedy that is really worthy of a thinking public.[3]

Moreover, after Cleon's death, the turbulent democracy did not again meet with a man who was able to rule them so completely, through their own passions. We know very little of the domestic history of Athens between 421 and 414, but so much at least is clear, that no one was able to lord it over the assembly. Her foreign policy was, at one time, influenced by the advocates of peace, and at another, by the instigators of war and adventure; it oscillates between Nicias and Alcibiades; neither of them succeeds in giving it a firm and continuous direction. Men of lesser ability, like Hyperbolus, Theramenes, Demostratus, Androcles, to name only a few of them, attempt to play an important part and flit about the rostrum. Intrigue is everywhere rampant, and in this confusion and excitement, the oligarchy, which perceives the weakness of the predominant party, and observes its in-

[1] This passage (ll. 518-562), written in Eupolidean measure, clearly reveals the date of its composition. It contains an allusion (l. 553) to the *Maricas* of Eupolis, performed in 421, and another to a play by Hermippus which followed it (l. 557, εἶθ' αὖθις), and finally to other and even more recent plays (l. 558, ἄλλοι τ' ἤδη πάντες). The passage cannot, therefore, have been written before 418. On the other hand, it seems to antedate the exile of Hyperbolus, of which it makes no mention; he was exiled in April, 417, at the very latest (Curtius, *Hist. gr.* translated into English by Ward (1872), iii. pp. 314-15, and Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1257, note 1).

[2] *Clouds*, ll. 553-559.

[3] *Ibid.* ll. 560-562.

coherent conduct, gradually regains confidence and matures its plans.

Indifferent material this for political comedy, which demanded something distinct, vigorous and consistent as the object of attack. Ordinary occurrences, fluctuating ideas, a capricious and dissembling policy, were hardly fit subjects to be represented on the comic stage. Spent on such subjects, dramatic satire must needs lose its general application and its philosophical value, and become more personal. Indeed, this is just what we get a hint of in the altogether too rare and very incomplete records. Eupolis appears to have been supreme in this style. His *Maricas* and his *Flatterers*, which were both produced in 421,[1] no doubt supplied particularly startling examples of its furious and ill-natured violence. In the former of these two plays, by way of scourging the demagogue Hyperbolus, he brought his mother upon the stage in the guise of a repulsive, drunken old woman, who danced the κόρδαξ (an indecent dance). In the second play he makes fun of the private life of Callias, the son of Hypponicus, and takes pleasure in exposing him to the insulting derision of the people, by exhibiting him surrounded by parasites, living in debauchery, and rapidly squandering his patrimony. In the following year, 420,[2] he had his *Autolycus* performed, in which he attacked one of the distinguished families of Athens, and at the same time discredited and insulted the young victor of the Panathenaea of 422, his father Lycon, and his mother Rhodia.[3] And finally, his *Baptae* (Βάπται), which was probably performed in 415,[4] seems to have been directed against the celebration of a strange cult by Alcibiades and his friends.

[1] Argument of Aristophanes' *Peace* and scholia to the *Clouds*, l. 552. The words ὕστερον τρίτῳ ἔτει in this scholium seem to me to be correctly interpreted by Kock (*Fragm. com. gr.* i. p. 307): their meaning is "two years later." Meineke misunderstood them, and Gilbert followed him in his mistake (*Beiträge*, p. 212).

[2] *Athenaeus*, v. 216 D.

[3] Schol. to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, l. 270. Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, "Autolykos," 4, art. by Judeich, who regards the name Rhodia as indicating her birthplace. This does not agree with the scholium.

[4] Meineke, *Hist. crit. com.* p. 125.

These few examples are conclusive.[1] It was really the spirit of Archilochus that animated Athenian comedy at this time, at least in the case of those poets who preferred not to devote themselves to mythological parody or to extravaganza pure and simple. Political comedy, properly speaking, such as had been known during the war against Archidamus, which mingled philosophy with satire, and aimed at giving the people general instruction, was changed under the influence of circumstances; but the change was not for the better.

Aristophanes seems not to have shared in this tendency. To tell the truth, we do not know what plays he produced between 421 and 414, but we have no warrant for the belief that he wrapt himself in silence after the period of active production which had gone before. On the other hand, however, had he written an important work of political satire during this time, it is rather unlikely that it would have been entirely forgotten. We must rather assume that the plays he wrote during these few years touched only incidentally on topics of the day, and that, as a rule, they partook of the character of literary criticism, or of mythological parody, or else of pure extravaganza. This is the way the *Birds* begins.

Shortly before the time this play was performed, a law had been enacted—if we may trust ancient authorities—which limited the license of comedy. Its author was a certain Syracosius, an obscure politician, who, by the way, is known only through the derisive allusions of his contemporaries. The most interesting of these allusions is found in a fragment of the *Hermit* by Phrynichus, performed in 414. In it the poet expressed the wish that Syracosius might get the mange. "For," said he, "he has deprived me of the liberty of

[1] We may probably add also the *Hyperbolus* by Plato, one of the plays to which Aristophanes apparently makes allusion in the parabasis added to the *Clouds* in 418. Cf. Schol. *Thesmoph.* l. 808 and see Kock, *Fr. com. gr.* i. p. 643. The *Demes* by Eupolis was apparently of the same character; the play was directed against the recently elected generals. Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 222 *et seq.*, assumes that it dealt with Alcibiades, and dates this satire in the year 419. The fragments, however, do not afford any solid ground for this conjecture. Therefore, the general import of the play remains uncertain, and this is why I do not include it in the above enumeration.

putting those into my comedy whom I wished to" (*ἀφείλετο γὰρ κωμῳδεῖν οὓς ἐπεθύμουν*). The scholiast of Aristophanes who quotes this fragment adds: "*It seems* that Syracosius passed a decree which forbade the introduction of any person by name in comedy."[1] We see that this statement is based on a conjecture, which appears to have the lines of Phrynichus as its only foundation. They evidently allude to an actual occurrence, but we do not know what this occurrence was. It would be necessary to know who were the men whom Phrynichus wished to deride, before we could attempt to discover how Syracosius could have thwarted his desire and deprived him of the means of doing this. In any event, the alleged decree is very improbable in itself. Comedies performed about the year 414 abound in proper names and satirical allusions to contemporaries; the few extant fragments of Phrynichus' *Hermit* are full of them (fr. 20, 21, 22). The text of the alleged decree, in the form in which it is given by the scholiast, is therefore certainly incorrect; moreover, it is only a reproduction of the decree of 440. What, then, is left of his testimony? Nothing, or very little; and it will no doubt be best, for a proper appreciation of Aristophanes' tendencies at this period, to disregard it entirely.[2]

II

No play has given rise to more differences of opinion than the *Birds*, not, however, in regard to its poetic value, for by

[1] Scholia to the *Birds*, l. 1297: *δοκεῖ δὲ* (Συρακόσιος) *καὶ ψήφισμα τεθεικέναι μὴ κωμῳδεῖσθαι ὀνομαστί τινα.*

[2] The absurd testimony of the scholiast on Aelius, Aristides (ed. Dindorf, iii. p. 444), who knows nothing of Syracosius, and attributes a law of this kind to Cleon, surely in no way confirms the trustworthiness of the testimony we have already refused to accept. Nevertheless, modern scholars, as a rule, admit the authenticity of Syracosius' decree: Curtius (*Hist. gr.* translated by Ward, iii. p. 365 ff.) attributes this decree to the influence of the oligarchs; Ed. Meyer (*Gesch. d. Alterth.* iv. p. 523) regards it as the work of the radical party, and this view is shared by Busolt (iii. 2nd part, p. 1349). So many risky hypotheses, based on a conjecture of a perplexed grammarian!

common consent, it is recognized as one of the most charming creations of Aristophanes' genius. Regarding the author's intentions, however, there is controversy among the critics, and this controversy, begun in antiquity, does not yet seem near settlement. Without entering here upon a detailed statement, which would be endless and tedious, we may simply say that these divergent opinions can be reduced to three, which, however, in turn admit of many shades of meaning.[1] Some of the critics regard the play as a pure extravaganza, containing only occasional derisive allusions to men and events of the day, but without general import. Others, on the contrary, descry in it a political and moral allegory, cleverly constructed on a very deliberate satirical plan, which, in turn, they interpret in various ways. And finally, others try to hold a middle course between these two opposite views. It is not possible to deal with this play without taking sides in the controversy. But, after all that has been said about it, this may be done briefly, if we confine our observations to its really important aspects.

First of all we must eliminate an *a priori* idea which is of a sort to mislead us.

Some critics have either laid down the principle or have tacitly assumed that every comedy of Aristophanes must have a satirical thought as its foundation.[2] This amounts to removing the difficulty by solving it in advance. In fact, what we know about ancient comedy gives us no warrant whatever for so absolute a statement. On the contrary, it seems incontestable that in the second half of the fifth century a number of comedies were produced at Athens which were purely imaginative, intended merely to amuse the public; and we have no

[1] A short review of this discussion up to the year 1874 may be found in an article by Bursian, "*Über die Tendenz der Vögel des Aristophanes*," *Sitzungsberichte der Münchner Akad., Histor. phil. Klasse*, 1875, p. 375. His account must be supplemented by citing the *Histories of Greek Literature*, chiefly those of Bernhardy, Sittl, Bergk, Christ, the work of J. Denis, *La Comédie grecque*, the *Greek Histories* of Curtius and Busolt, the *Beiträge* of Gilbert, the *Geschichte des Alterthums* by Ed. Meyer. I have myself touched on this subject in *l'Histoire de la littérature grecque*, 2nd ed. 1898, iii. p. 546.

[2] J. Denis, *La comédie grecque*, i. p. 437.

proof that Aristophanes' plays were an exception in this respect. This self-styled principle is therefore worthless in itself, and it is only by a study of the play that we can get light on its meaning.

First we must consider the opening action. Two Athenians, Peithetaerus and Euelpides, leave Athens and have no desire to return; they declare they cannot live there longer. Nevertheless, they admit that the city is glorious and prosperous.[1] What fault have they to find with it, then? Only one—there are too many lawsuits there. One of them says: "The cicadae sit chirping on the boughs only a month or two; but the Athenians chirp over their lawsuits all their lives long. That is why we are leaving."[2]

When we remember that this must have been written toward the close of the year 415, it is hard to avoid comparing this statement with Thucydides' testimony about the state of mind of the Athenians at that time. It was in the summer of 415 that the affairs of the Hermae and of the Mysteries successively startled the city. The suspicious spirit of the Athenian democracy had been aroused by these events. The historian says: "The people saw in them an organized plot to overthrow the state and to abolish the democracy."[3] "Far from being allayed by the people's absorption in the preparations for the Sicilian War, these misgivings only grew for several months after the departure of the fleet, which took place in midsummer."[4] Thucydides goes on: "In their universal distrust they accepted all evidence indiscriminately and arrested and imprisoned men of the highest respectability on the faith of irresponsible people."[5] And again: "The exasperation of the masses and the number of arrests increased day by day."[6] "It is true that one of the prisoners finally declared himself guilty and made revelations, true or false, about the affair of the Hermae, and this somewhat calmed the anxiety of the people on that score.

[1] *Birds* l. 36: *αὐτὴν μὲν οὐ μισοῦντ' ἐκείνην τὴν πόλιν, τὸ μὴ οὐ μεγάλην εἶναι φύσει κεὐδαίμονα.*

[2] *Ibid.* ll. 39-42.

[3] Thucydides, vi. 27.

[4] *Ibid.* vi. 30.

[5] *Ibid.* vi. 53.

[6] *Ibid.* vi. 60.

But the affair of the Mysteries remained unexplained for some time longer and kept excitement alive. The people clung to the conviction that this was likewise the result of a plot against the democracy, hatched with the connivance of the enemies of the country. At one time, the citizens spent the night in arms in the temple of Theseus, evidently prepared for a surprise by the oligarchs; and at the same time the Athenians handed over some oligarchs of Argos, whom they had held as hostages, to the Argive democrats to be slain."[1] We may be sure that, after this, the political trials must have been continued during all the last part of the year 415, and perhaps even beyond that date—that is, during just the time when Aristophanes was writing his play. If this is true, the allusion appears incontestable.[2] The word *δίκαι* in the lines quoted is not contrasted with *γραφαί*; it is not the special designation of private suits. It applies, indirectly at least, to all legal proceedings then under way, even to those which did not come to trial. Aristophanes may have seen several of his friends denounced, imprisoned and examined. It was this prevalence of suspicion, denunciation, investigation and arbitrary severity, that gave him the idea of the fantastic departure of these two Athenians. In the same year and at the same competition, another comic poet, Phrynichus, produced his *Hermit* (Μονότροπος), whose title clearly enough reveals his intention. The hermit, too, must have fled from Athens for similar reasons. In the circles in which the two poets moved, people no doubt thought that Athens was no longer fit to live in. This is what each of them conveyed in two different fictions that were inspired by the same thought.

And so politics do figure at the beginning of the plot. But this does not mean that the entire plot is a logical and continuous development of the idea indicated at the beginning. Have we not seen that in the *Knights* the opening incident of the play is borrowed from the expedition to Sphacteria and that nevertheless this expedition plays no

[1] Thucydides, vi. 61.

[2] *Birds*, ll. 40-41 . . . Ἀθηναῖοι δ' ἀεὶ
ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ᾄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.

part in the development of the plot? A comedy of Aristophanes should not be treated like a deductive argument nor like a mathematical demonstration.

What are our two self-constituted exiles after? A place where one may live in peace (*τόπον ἀπράγμονα*, l. 44). They mean to ask an ancient King of Thrace, Tereus, who, as we know, was changed into a hoopoe, to be good enough to point it out to them. As a bird, he has had opportunity to see many countries, and as a man, he is in a position to have an opinion. And now they stand before him. Tereus asks them: "'From what country do you come?' 'From the land of the brave triremes.' 'So you are heliasts?' 'Nay, quite the contrary; we are anti-heliasts' (*ἀπηλιαστά*). 'Grows that seedling there?' 'Aye, you could find a bit in the country.'"[1] The idea which we just hinted at here appears in a somewhat more precise form. The two friends have rustic minds. The seedling of lawsuits is grown only in the city. That is why they hate the city.

But how do they describe the ideal city for which they are searching? If the poet has a serious project of a really political nature to propose, this is clearly the place where it ought to appear. But note their first declaration: at no price will they accept an aristocratic state (ll. 125-126). Is this mere empty talk, meant to reassure the audience? We should be justified in so interpreting it only in case other ideas were suggested in what follows. This is not the case. The life for which Peithetaerus yearns, is a life of comfort, of pleasure, of easy intercourse—a rather vulgar ideal, if you choose, but by no means a revolutionary one (ll. 127-142). He is anxious, it is true, that his new home should not be on the sea-shore, for fear that some fine day the trireme, called "The Salaminia," may heave in sight with a process-server on board (l. 147). Granting that this allusion to the recall of Alcibiades implies a blame or a regret, it is at best nothing more than a word casually spoken which has no influence on the plot.

The decisive moment in the plot is Peithetaerus' proposal and the series of speeches by which he leads the birds to accept it. In other words, it is the construction of Cloud-

[1] *Birds*, ll. 108-111.

cuckootown. Those who have imputed revolutionary intentions to the poet, like Koechly, for example,[1] have been struck by this conceit, which seemed to them to be significant. Was not the imaginary building of a new city tantamount to a plain declaration that the existing city ought to be abolished and reorganized from foundation to turret? This would, in fact, be probable, if Cloudcuckootown had a constitution; but however closely we examine and dissect Aristophanes' extravaganza, we cannot find anything of the sort in it. Cloudcuckootown has no constitution. Not a word about the future organization of offices, of elections, of balloting for magistrates, of pay for the judges, or of the restriction of civic rights—in a word, of all the questions about which the Athenian parties differed at that time. Not one of these flighty fellows manifests the slightest personal ambition, nor the slightest leaning toward oligarchy. Even if we wished, by hook or crook, to give these fancies the names of real things, the winged people would look to us like a democracy—one would almost be tempted to say like a giddy-brained democracy.[2] And their leader, Peithetaerus, has no other means of action than his speeches, just like the ordinary Athenian demagogues. He is the people's leader, *προστάτης τοῦ δήμου*, not at all an aggressive reformer, nor a man who aspires to tyranny.

When once the city is built, it is true that he excludes quite a number of people of the sort that swarmed at Athens: a lyric poet, a dealer in oracles, a scheming geometrician, also an inspector with a vague mission, and a manufacturer of decrees. Only the last two have a semblance of political character. Somewhat further along there comes a second lot: a prodigal and needy son who thinks of strangling his father, the poet Cinesias, and finally a sycophant. If this is to serve as an indication of the reforms contemplated by Aristophanes, they would have consisted in ousting the bores and the rascals, among whom he counted only three special

[1] *Über die Vögel des Aristophanes*, Zürich, 1857.

[2] In line 1581 we learn that, among the birds, those who are suspected of evil designs against the democracy are roasted on a fork. What more need we ask?

products of the Athenian democracy: the inspector, whose particular business it was to fleece those whom he inspected, the manufacturer of decrees, a discreet ally of perplexed politicians, and finally the sycophant who makes a living out of denunciations. Projects of reform such as these may have appeared chimerical, but they were not of a kind to disturb any political party.

Need we attach any greater importance to the marriage of Peithetaerus and Royalty with which the play ends? And need we, by chance, be tempted to assume that Aristophanes employed this fiction in order to suggest to the Athenians the idea of the advantages of a monarchy? Had this been the case, he would have been the whole monarchical party in Athens, for we do not elsewhere find any trace of such a party in the history of the time. This absurdity should suffice to doom all such assumptions, even if the play did not give a sufficiently clear indication of the poet's real thought. The Royalty whom Peithetaerus marries is naught else than the Government of the universe. She is the daughter of Zeus, and when Zeus transfers his sceptre to the birds, who have become the masters of the world, he takes their representative as his son-in-law, in order to sanction that transfer.[1] Thus, this marriage is a part of the entirely fantastic fiction of

[1] In l. 1534 ff. Prometheus says to Peithetaerus:

ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ σπένδεσθ', ἐὰν μὴ παραδιδῷ
τὸ σκῆπτρον ὁ Ζεὺς τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν πάλιν
καὶ τὴν Βασίλειάν σοι γυναῖκ' ἔχειν διδῷ.

It is clear that here the sceptre and Royalty are two equivalent symbols. What may have misled some readers is the definition that Prometheus subsequently gives of Royalty. "Who is she?" asks Peithetaerus. Prometheus replies, "A very beautiful young girl, who manufactures Zeus' thunder, and everything else as well—good advice, good laws, wisdom, arsenals, insults, the paymaster of the dicasts (*κωλακρέτην*), the three obols." "So she is his steward of everything," says Peithetaerus. "That is just what I meant to say." Here the poet's rather subtle thought seems to be to define the absolute power of Zeus by amusing examples that would readily be understood by the people. And that is why, after having given Royalty abstract and philosophical attributes, he unexpectedly, in line 1539, represents her as disposing at will of everything which at Athens depended on the popular leaders.

the claims the birds made against the gods; it has no other meaning.

The foregoing observations show that Aristophanes' play certainly did not have an important reform of the Athenian constitution as its object, and that it does not even make pretence of suggesting one. Does it not, however, contain some satirical elements of a general character? This question remains to be studied.

III

A great many critics have found in this comedy a more or less direct allusion to the Sicilian expedition, and to the state of mind which had brought it to pass.[1] To their minds, the bird folk represent the Athenian people; they possess their flightiness, their proneness to over-excite themselves, their credulous enthusiasm, and they make and carry out huge projects. Only, some of these critics think that this picture is satirical, while others believe that, in making it, the poet shared in the aspirations of his fellow-citizens.

This very diversity of opinion shows how greatly we must distrust these summary and sweeping interpretations. The fact is that, if Aristophanes did wish to make fun of the ambitions of Athens, he fails to make his intention clear, for the birds of his comedy have complete success in their undertaking. And it cannot be said that it is their success alone that is fantastic, for there is just as much that is fantastic in the original notion of their project as in the development that ensues. Moreover, is the intention which is imputed to him probable? In truth, we know absolutely nothing of what Aristophanes may have thought about the Sicilian expedition. But if we assume that he regarded it as an act of folly—and this assumption is by no means unreasonable—would he have

[1] Bernhardy, *Griech. Litterat.* 2nd part, ii. p. 657; Denis, *Com. grecque*, p. 457: "And so with airy grace and charm he makes fun of the lofty hopes and unbounded ambitions of Athens, that are out of all proportion to her actual strength." On the other hand, K. Kock ("Die Vögel des Aristophanes," *Jahrb. f. Klass. Philol.*, 1865, 1st supplementary volume, pp. 373-402), regards the poet as a convert to a warlike and adventurous policy.

employed such means to criticise it? The great imprudence of the Athenians—and this might be called the characteristic feature of their policy in 415—lay in forgetting the enemies at their gates when they went abroad in search of others.[1] Now, the birds do nothing of that sort. Quite on the contrary, if one enters into the spirit of the play, their undertaking is very well conceived and perfectly adapted to its ends. But let us go still further. How could the Athenian people recognize themselves, in the spring of 414, in these merry and light-hearted people, in whom these critics discover their image? Surely the Sicilian expedition had aroused and still aroused great hopes. Thucydides expressly declares that such was the case.[2] But the year 415 had been a dreary and anxious one. The first engagements, in the autumn and during the winter, without being disastrous, had revealed some serious difficulties. Alcibiades was at Sparta, and in the spring of 414 the Lacedaemonians were preparing to go to the rescue of Syracuse and to renew the war. This was known at Athens, as Nicias' reports disguised nothing,[3] and though courage remained undiminished, idle fancies must at least have given way to deliberate resolve. Therefore the satire imputed to Aristophanes would have been a year behind time. Up-to-date comedies are not composed of antiquated jokes.

There remain the rôles of Peithetaerus and Euelpides. Is there a political, or even a moral purpose in this association of "Persuasive" and "Confiding"? Critics have generally thought so, but here again they differ when they seek to make the interpretation more precise.

In the eyes of some, Peithetaerus is the concocter of schemes, boastful and daring, who at that time held sway over the oligarchical hetaeries—the organizer of plots and of revolution. Euelpides stands for those who approved of him, admired, and followed him. Like some who belonged to these circles, Peithetaerus is audacious even toward the gods, whom he finally sets aside by making the birds their successors.[4] In

[1] Thucydides, vi. 10. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 24. [3] *Ibid.* vii. 8.

[4] Bursian, "Über die Tendenz der Vögel des Aristophanes," *Sitzungsberichte der Münchner Akad., Histor. philos. Klasse*, 1875, p. 375.

the eyes of others, the same character represents both the exiled Alcibiades and Gorgias. Just as Alcibiades was then advising the Spartans to occupy and fortify Deceleia against the Athenians, so Peithetaerus advises the birds to build Cloudcuckootown as a protection against the gods. Or again, his promises are thought to recall those which Alcibiades made to the Athenians in order to urge them on to Sicily.[1] As for Gorgias, a reminder of his eloquence is thought to be found in the adroit and subtle loquacity of this fine talker, and, in support of this conjecture, the quite episodical ode is cited that speaks of the pernicious "tongue bellying" race (ἐγγλωττογαστόρων), a barbarian people, who are also known, the poet tells us, as the *Gorgiases* and the *Philips*.[2] All these hypotheses are based on the idea that Peithetaerus possesses a peculiar gift of persuasion. Is this idea correct? In fact, a great many of Aristophanes' characters are strikingly like him in this respect. Dicaeopolis, Agoracritus, Bdelycleon, Trygaeus, Lysistrata, Praxagora, all have the same enterprising disposition, the same direct and decided will-power, and practically the same fertile subtlety in argument, the same executive talent. The differences arise from the plot, and are insignificant in comparison with the traits possessed in common, beneath which we seem to discover the poet's own personality. As for the play which we are now studying, it is hard to see how this character could have been other than it is, the nature of the comedy being once admitted.

As for an irreligious spirit, if indeed there is any such in this comedy, it is not to be found specially in the rôle of Peithetaerus, but rather in the plot itself, and in the way in which the gods are represented. The plot is based on the idea that the alleged power of the gods is at the mercy of a bold rebellion; the gods themselves are travestied as ridiculous persons. Slaves to their wants, they cannot get on without men, nor without women, and for their negotiations with the rebels, they choose as their ambassadors, first, a stupid barbarian,

[1] Süvern, "Über Aristoph. Vögel," *Abhandlung der Berliner Akad.*, 1827, *Histor. philos. Klasse*, pp. 1-109; Blaydes, *Aves*, ed. major, 1882, p. xiii.

[2] *Birds*, 1694-1705.

who does not understand anything and cannot make himself understood, next, Heracles, a sort of heavy and greedy athlete, and finally, Poseidon, who is obliged to follow them, although he is their leader. All this appears very irreverent to us. But is it really a satire on the audaciousness of contemporary thought? In order to decide this question, let us compare Aristophanes' own utterances with one another.

In the *Clouds* we see him pointing out to his audience the bold impiety of the philosophers of the day and the consequences which he foresees from it. Here there can be no doubt about his purpose, which is manifestly satirical. The theories he imputes to Socrates are really those of a few contemporary philosophers, more or less altered, mixed up and caricatured, but recognizable as a whole. As for their consequences, they are as plain as day, in the acts of Pheidippides as well as in the pleadings of the "Unjust," and they are formally imputed to Socrates. In the *Birds* there is nothing of this kind—no theory and no philosophical theology. The cosmogony of the parabasis is nothing but an amusing conceit in which are mingled reminiscences of Orphism, but which cannot be regarded as a satire on any system. It is mythology itself that affords the poet matter for joking, and not the theories of those who were regarded as atheists at the time. And so it happens that the impiety which we might be tempted to discover in the play, far from being properly considered as the object of his censure, should on the contrary be laid at his own door. In fact, there is no such impiety. It recalls the manner of treating the gods which was accepted by the Athenian public, however devout it may have been in other respects. But this is not the place to insist on this point. The only thing that interests us is the evident fact that Aristophanes' attitude towards religious matters in the *Birds* cannot, in any way, be traced to a satirical purpose, nor, consequently, to a mental reservation of a political nature. On the contrary, his spirit seems at no time to have shown itself so free, so little affected by practical considerations, in this delicate matter.

It is easy to draw a conclusion from these observations.

The *Birds* certainly is full of scattered allusions. At every turn the poet hurls shafts of derision at people and things. It cannot even be denied that some of this derision is of a general character. Nobody will gainsay that the giddy, flighty, credulous birds often remind one of the Athenians. Peithetaerus, too, has some of the characteristics of the politicians of the day. And finally, as we have seen, the underlying motive of the plot is a criticism of the moral condition of the city, of its propensity to suspicions and to lawsuits. So much must be conceded to satire. But satire does not enter into the essentials of the fiction itself, and it is not incorporated in the plot. No governing purpose guides the poet's imagination; on the contrary, his imagination is mistress and guides his conceits.

Even these scattered allusions are not traceable to a uniform tendency nor to a controlling prejudice. Aristophanes makes epigrams on certain demagogues and on certain democratic vagaries, he makes them on Gorgias and Philip and their disciples, but he also makes them on the aristocracy, on those who favor Sparta, and on the temporizing tactics of Nicias.[1] On the other hand, he exhorts the young people to duty, and even to military duty.[2] All this seems to signify remarkable liberality of mind, a liberality that cannot be explained by a prohibitive law, if we admit the existence of such a law. Surely the democracy had done nothing since 421 to disarm criticism; but the oligarchy, for its part, does not seem during this period to have succeeded in exerting any permanent influence, nor in proclaiming a political platform that was worthy of discussion. Its most ardent adherents much rather thought of organizing secretly and of preparing for an emergency. The others, and above all the younger ones, amused themselves by scandalizing the people with fantastic outbursts of impiety. Neither this dangerous childishness, nor this policy of plotting can have pleased the judicious mind of Aristophanes. As he advanced in years, he was always less in touch with the noisy set. His thoughts, as well as his wit, inclined to moderation. He judged men and

[1] *Birds*, ll. 637-8, 765, 813-815. [2] *Ibid.* ll. 1363-1369.

events from a higher point of view, and he was swayed by more general ideas. Unless I am mistaken, this may be seen in the comedy of the *Birds*, and is even more noticeable in the *Lysistrata*, which was performed two years later.

IV

Ancient authorities place two of Aristophanes' extant plays, the *Lysistrata* and the *Thesmophoriazusae*, in the year 411, but they do not tell us which of them was performed first.[1] It is, however, generally admitted that the *Lysistrata* was performed at the Lenaea and the *Thesmophoriazusae* at the Dionysia.[2] This conclusion rests chiefly on a passage in the *Lysistrata* in which the poet charges Peisander with theft.[3] Indeed, it seems impossible to believe that this insult was offered on the stage under the oligarchical regime, when Peisander was at the height of his power.

If the *Lysistrata* was performed at the end of January, 411, it must have been written in the second half of the year 412. It is, therefore, in the events of that year, or in those which slightly preceded it, that a probable explanation of the intention and dispositions of the poet must be sought.

When word came to Athens of the disaster that had befallen the army in Sicily toward the end of September, 413,[4] it produced an explosion of anger, which was followed by a profound stupor.[5] And yet, the energetic spirit of Athens reacted almost at once. It does not appear that anybody at that time proposed to make peace. By common consent, preparations were made for vigorous resistance, although nobody dared any longer

[1] *Lysistrata*, Argument, p. 4, Blaydes: *ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ* Καλλίου *ἄρχοντος τοῦ μετὰ* Κλεόκριτον. *Thesmoph.* schol. ll. 190, 804, 841; cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen*, ii. p. 343.

[2] Süvern, *Comm. de Nubibus*, p. 44; cf. Blaydes, *Lysistrata*, Argumentum, p. 5.

[3] *Lysistrata*, ll. 490-492; *ἵνα γὰρ Πείσανδρος ἔχοι κλέπτειν χοὶ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐπέχοντες, ἀεί τινα κορκορυγὴν ἐκύκων.*

[4] Thucydides, vii. 79. 3.

[5] *Ibid.* viii. 1-2.

count on victory.[1] Moreover, the sense of danger had the effect of allaying discussion, and of making the masses more reasonable. An extraordinary office was created—that of the *Probouloi*—whose duty it was to take such measures as the exigency might call for, and ten aged men, whose experience no doubt recommended them, were chosen to fill it.[2]

This state of mind appears to have lasted during the whole of the year 412. The former parties had, so to say, disappeared. Though the people, as a whole, remained attached to their institutions, they had at least grown to hate their regular leaders. They distrusted the fine talkers, the wild enthusiasts and the makers of promises; they felt, in a confused way perhaps, but strongly, the need of firmer and more consistent guidance, and instinctively turned to those who offered them better guarantees of moderation and prudence. Consequently the most circumspect of the radical politicians were in a fair way to become conservatives. Peisander, in particular, was preparing to become one of the restorers of the oligarchy,[3] when occasion should offer. But the moderate party, who for the moment retained authority, no more dreamed of coming to terms with the enemy than did the erstwhile demagogues, probably because they felt that it was impossible.[4] The military events of 412 did not alter the situation. Athens was able to confront the immediate danger. She saw, it is true, a threatening alliance concluded between her enemies and the king of Persia, Darius II.; she also saw serious defections take place among her allies and her subjects —those of Chios, of Erythraea and Clazomenae,[5] of Miletus[6]

[1] Thucydides, viii. 1. 3, and 24. 5: *τοὺς Ἀθηναίους . . . οὐδ' αὐτοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἔτι μετὰ τὴν Σικελικὴν ξυμφορὰν ὡς οὐ πάνυ πόνηρα σφῶν βεβαίως τὰ πράγματα εἴη.*

[2] Thucydides, viii. 1. 3-4. Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 29. 2. Bekker, *Anecd.* i. p. 298; cf. Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. d. Alterth.* iv. p. 558.

[3] Lysias, *Oration*, 26. 9.

[4] The oligarchical party itself at first thought of continuing the war (Thuc. viii. 53. 63). It was only after the execution of the *coup d'état*, when all thought of reconciliation with Alcibiades and at the same time of support from Persia had to be abandoned, that an attempt was made to come to terms. *Beiträge*, pp. 315-316.

[5] Thucydides, viii. 14. [6] *Ibid.* viii. 17.

and of other places besides. But these defections did not all take place at the same time, and she succeeded in checking or in forestalling several of them, notably that of Lesbos.[1] Solidly intrenched in Samos, she did not permit herself to be expelled from Ionia, and kept her foes in awe. When winter came, her affairs were, as a whole, in a better state than was to have been expected. Persia, the source of greatest anxiety, was supporting the Peloponnesians with its subsidies, and was promising them the co-operation of its fleet. And it was just this that kept careful politicians from believing in the possibility of negotiating a peace. Sparta's position was too favorable for her to consent to abandon it before having completely deprived her adversary of power.

How did it happen then that Aristophanes, just at this time, conceived the idea of writing a comedy in favor of peace? A comic poet might, in case of need, antagonize a prevailing opinion, but evidently only if he could rely upon at least a considerable and influential minority. In January, 411 we cannot discover in the Athenian masses a minority of the sort that would have been inclined to propose peace.

A comedy, and even a comedy with a distinct tendency, cannot be likened to the draft of a law, nor to a definite argument. It is rather in the nature of a suggestion, which does not necessarily lead to a practical result. The poet may appeal to deep-seated opinions which are for the moment kept back and restrained by urgent considerations, but which only await an opportunity to gain the upper hand, and even await it impatiently. And if he personally shares those opinions as fully, or even more fully, than anybody else, it is natural that he should wish to encourage them, or to strengthen them, or that he should even try to show, in his own fashion, that their realization is, after all, not so far distant, nor so impossible, as people about him commonly think. This is just what it seems to me Aristophanes tried to do in his *Lysistrata*. That he did so independently of all party influence, appears from the conception of the play and from its development; and this is what we must try to make clear.

[1] Thucydides, viii. 22-23.

V

One of the first facts to be noted is that in this comedy he did not put any party nor any political group upon the stage. There is no aristocratic chorus, as in the *Knights*, nor a representative of the rural democracy, like Dicaeopolis or Trygaeus, nor a decided enemy of influential politicians, like Bdelycleon. Who are the mouthpieces of the poet? They are women, and foremost of all Lysistrata, the leader in the conspiracy, the organizer of the enterprise, who regulates its progress with such clever decision; and her companions are Athenian, Boeotian and Lacedaemonian women. They are drawn together by a common interest, which is not that of any party, nor of any city in particular, but, properly speaking, a feminine interest. They abhor war, because war destroys family life, separates them from their husbands and their sons, keeps the young girls from getting married, occasions them all alarm, anguish and mourning, and finally, because it ruins their special work, which consists in making the home prosper, and through the home, the city, and through the city, the whole of Greece. Presently we shall come back to this very interesting Hellenic sentiment. Here we need only observe that, as women, they have this sentiment as the result of the painful anxiety which affects their domestic life. As for the means they adopt to bring the scheme to a successful issue, we know, without having to insist upon it, that it is the most feminine imaginable. For the capture of the Acropolis is merely an amusing conceit, necessary to keep the plot going, and the poet almosts neglects it in the course of the play. These women are intrenched in their resolve much more than they are intrenched in the citadel, and this resolve really has nothing to do either with oligarchy or democracy.

Thus, the poet, at the outset, places himself above party considerations by the choice of his representatives, and seems to give us to understand that he is devoted to a more general and truly human interest. Do the allusions which appear

here and there throughout the scenes conflict with such a purpose? By no means; for they are directed indiscriminately against all those who harass the city for the benefit of their ambition or of their greed.

When the old men get ready to storm the gate of the Acropolis with battering rams, they clamor for the aid of the generals, who are at Samos: "Which of the Samian generals will give us a hand?"[1] The allusion is very obscure. The best ancient commentators, especially Didymus, referred it to Phrynichus, but without explaining it, or, if they did explain it, their explanation has been lost. What we lack here is a detailed chronicle, by month and day. I think it most likely that the Athenians had got wind of the intrigues that were ripe in the army at Samos, of the negotiations with Alcibiades, of the differences among the generals, and that the poet intended these old men to say: "On which of the generals can we rely to defend solely the public interest?" It would, at best, be hard to discover in such a question any semblance of a profession of political faith.[2]

The scene in which the discussion between Lysistrata and the Proboulos takes place, is the most important one of the play, from the point of view of ideas. At the very outset Lysistrata declares that she has taken possession of the Acropolis, in order to put the money in security, "so that," she says to the magistrate, "it may no longer afford you a reason for war." "What!" exclaims the astonished Proboulos, "is money the cause of our fighting?" "Yes," replied Lysistrata, "and it is on account of the money that the whole trouble arose. For Peisander and those who have their minds

[1] *Lysistrata*, l. 313 and schol.: *τίς ξυλλάβοιτ' ἂν τοῦ ξύλου τῶν ἐν Σάμῳ στρατηγῶν;*

[2] Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 299, thinks that the generals *all* belonged to the "war party," and that, consequently, the old men who come to the Acropolis in search of money to conduct the war, must have regarded them as allies. Could the audience have guessed such a riddle? Besides, we have absolutely no knowledge as to whether all the generals were known for their specially warlike dispositions, and it must be admitted that this is very unlikely *a priori*. As a rule, they belonged to the moderate party or even to the oligarchy (see Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1412).

bent on office needed a chance to steal. In future let them do whatever they choose; the money, at all events, they cannot have."[1]

We know who Peisander was: an ambitious demagogue, who at this very moment scented the change in the wind, and became, as we have already said, one of the promoters of the oligarchical revolution.[2] Does the poet attack the democrat or the oligarch here? It seems clear that, at the time when the play was performed, the assembly to which Peisander came, at the instigation of the oligarchs of Samos, to preach a change of constitution to the people, had already been held.[3] But Peisander did not pretend to be an oligarch. In public he doubtless professed that he was still devoted to the radical democracy, and he merely proposed his scheme of reform as a temporary concession to an urgent necessity. And Aristophanes could, if he chose, insist on seeing only the demagogue in him.[4] But it is well worth observing that he is named in connection with a group of ambitious men "whose minds are bent on office" (*οἱ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐπέχοντες*). Whom does Aristophanes mean by this? Another passage gives us light on this point. Later on (ll. 574 *et seq.*) Lysistrata proclaims her policy. If the men want to act properly, they need only treat politics just as women treat the wool which they wish to spin. "First of all, just as they wash the wool to get rid of the grease, so the rascals should be driven from the city energetically, under the whip; these 'burrs' must be got rid of; then they should thoroughly card the people who stick to one another, who herd together and press about the offices, and they should pluck off, one by one, the matted heads." These metaphors, which it is hard to render into English, become clear when we study them closely, and they were specially clear to the Athenians. The poet attacks the

[1] *Lysistrata*, ll. 488-492. [2] Lysias, *Oration* 25. 9.

[3] Thucydides, viii. 53. The historian does not give the date. His account seems to show that there were several sessions of the assembly. But Busolt (*Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1468, note 2, and p. 1471, note 1) has shown, in a convincing manner, that these sessions were held in the course of January.

[4] Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1461, note 1.

political associations, which were organized with a view to influencing the elections and the verdicts of the courts, and which Thucydides has described in more explicit terms.[1] They are commonly known as hetaeries. Now, these hetaeries were nearly all oligarchical groups, and so it is quite probable that, in the former of the two passages quoted, it was these politicians among the oligarchs whom the poet attacked, when he spoke of ambitious men "whose minds are bent on office." At any rate, they are certainly meant in the second passage. Consequently, it appears that, in the words of Lysistrata, he attacks all ambitious persons, without distinction of party. Had he been a partisan and an abettor of the revolution which was then on foot, such utterances could not be understood.

Even the part given to the Proboulos well shows how little Aristophanes was under the influence of the oligarchical party at this time. We have already seen under what circumstances and for what purposes the *Probouloi* had been created. In no sense did they constitute a democratic magistracy. Indeed, Aristotle informs us that, when the oligarchical revolution took place, twenty newly elected Probouloi were added to the ten already in office, and that together they formed the college.[2] Thus, the original Probouloi were in the confidence of the men who brought about the revolution even before it took place. Had Aristophanes been with them heart and soul, he ought to have had due regard for the feelings of these moderators, who stood for prudence. Does he act in this manner? His Proboulos is a pompous and absurd sort of a chap, whom people impudently mock and hold up to ridicule, and whom Lysistrata even muffles up in her hood, before proving to him that he knows nothing of public affairs. Horseplay by a poet in a jolly mood, if you choose, but very well suited, nevertheless, to show us that this poet was not a devout worshipper at the shrine of oligarchy.

The decisive argument of the revolutionists is known to

[1] Thucydides, viii. 54: *τὰς ξυνωμοσίας, αἵπερ ἐτύγχανον ἐν τῇ πόλει οὖσαι ἐπὶ δίκαις καὶ ἀρχαῖς.*

[2] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, c. xxix. 2.

have been that the doings of the radical democracy deprived Athens of all possibility of foreign help, that they frightened the great king and jeopardized the good-will of Alcibiades. Indeed, this is the substance of the speech which Thucydides imputes to Peisander.[1] It may be that a comic poet would still have hesitated to introduce such an argument on the stage in January, 411, even though he shared the views of the party. But surely it was not impossible to hint at it, to give it a hearing in some ingeniously devised scene, provided always that he took proper precautions. There is nothing of the sort in Aristophanes' play—not even the slightest suggestion of the sort.

Thus, everything combines to characterize his political tendency as absolutely independent, and if it aims at any domestic reform, it is only the allaying of hatred, the surrender of prejudices, and the co-operation of citizens in a spirit of mutual good-will. After saying how she meant to card the wool, Lysistrata adds: "And then they must tumble mutual good-will into the basket and mingle there the resident aliens (*μέτοικοι*) and even the foreigners, if they are our friends; in fact, everybody, including even those who owe money to the public treasury, for they too must be mingled with the others; and also, by Zeus, the cities which are colonies of this land must be recognized, for they are the scattered flocks that have fallen here and there. Let us gather them all and bring them here and put them together; and then we'll make a great heap of them from which to weave a cloak for the people."[2] Here we have in brief all that there is of Aristophanes' politics in the *Lysistrata*. It suggests a man who desires peace and harmony, tired by reciprocal animosities, not at all anxious for revolution, but rather longing for quiet, and very sincerely devoted to the greatness of his country.

Furthermore, in 411 the question of reform was subordinated to the question of war or peace. The latter dominated everything. How is it conceived and treated in the *Lysistrata*? The whole play is inspired and pervaded with a spirit of Hellenic fraternity which calls for description.

[1] Thucydides, viii. 58.

[2] *Lysistrata*, ll. 579-586.

Without going back to the historical origin of this sentiment, we need only recall that it had been strongly manifested during the fifth century, notwithstanding secret or open differences during the Persian wars, and the twenty or thirty years that followed. During the first period of its existence, at least, the maritime confederacy of Delos was really a national coalition of a large number of Greek cities against the barbarians. The rivalries which subsequently arose crowded out this sentiment, but did not entirely stifle it. Having lost its influence in the domain of politics, it maintained itself in that of literature and art, because poetry, oratory, philosophy and higher culture generally, were historically connected with various parts of Greece, and appealed to all the Greeks. Even during the Peloponnesian war we see that Athens was visited by philosophers, artists and leaders in every field. In the circles in which they moved they must necessarily have made evident the deep-seated community of the intellectual and moral ideals of the Greeks, and, consequently, the advantages that would come to them by living in harmony. We may add that, by encouraging a kindly spirit and humane feelings, they also did their share toward making people hate a war which was causing widespread ruin and desolation. Aristophanes, who was admired as a poet and known as a warm friend of peace, could not remain a stranger to these influences. We have already seen that as early as 421, in his comedy of the *Peace*, an undeniably Hellenic feeling was part and parcel of the dominant sentiment of the play—the joy of seeing the Athenian peasant at work and secure in his former state. But if we compare the *Lysistrata* and the *Peace*, we immediately perceive how strong this same Hellenic sentiment had grown in the poet's soul between 421 and 411.

At the very outset, we see that national unity exists among the women. The conspirators are not recruited from Athens alone. They comprise Boeotian and Peloponnesian women, and the robust Lacedaemonian Lampito, who is not the least emphatic among them. Their avowed aim is to "save the whole of Greece," *ὅλης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἡ σωτηρία*.[1] This formula

[1] *Lysistrata*, ll. 29-30, 41 : *κοινῇ σώσομεν τὴν Ἑλλαδα* ; cf. l. 525.

recurs several times, because it really expresses the gist of their thought; it is a question of rescuing the men from a murderous folly which would end in the destruction of the Hellenic name.[1] The chorus of women, it is true, consists of Athenians, and these Athenians appeal to the patron divinity of the city[2] and they proclaim their patriotism.[3] Their greatest desire is to help their native city by good counsels—the city to which they owe so much, and with whose festivals they have been identified since their childhood.[4] But, in their eyes, the interests of Athens are inseparable from the common interests of the Greeks. It is in peace, in concord, and not in war, that they must find their realization.

Such are the principles, and it now remains to apply them. In practice the desire for peace takes the form of diplomatic negotiations, that is, of compromise. What sort of a compromise does Aristophanes recommend to the rival cities as the price of peace?

It must be admitted that the poet is far from explicit on this point. The closing scene of the play represents an ideal sort of congress, in which sentiment plays a larger part than negotiations, properly speaking. Lysistrata is chosen as arbiter, and begs the deputies of Sparta and those of Athens to approach. It is Diallagé, Reconciliation, personified as a woman, who takes them by the hand. She does so with a feminine gentleness, which the poet points out as a great innovation,[5] and Lysistrata herself uses gentle and touching words in order to obtain her object: "Since I have you here, I wish to reproach you both, for you have deserved it. You who pour a common libation upon the altars, like brothers—and you are brothers—at Olympia, at Thermopylae, at Pytho (how many other sacred places could I name, did I not wish

[1] *Lysistrata*, l. 342: πολέμου καὶ μανιῶν ῥυσαμένας Ἑλλάδα καὶ πολίτας. Cf. ll. 523-526.

[2] *Ibid.* l. 341 *et seq.*

[3] *Ibid.* l. 347: ἔνι δὲ φιλόπολις ἀρετὴ φρόνιμος.

[4] *Ibid.* ll. 637-648.

[5] *Ibid.* l. 1116: μὴ χαλεπῇ τῇ χειρί, μητ' αὐθαδικῇ, μηθ' ὥσπερ ἡμῶν ἄνδρες ἀμαθῶς τοῦτ' ἔδρων.

be brief!); and to-day, when the barbarians, our true ıemies, are at our gates, you with your armies slay Greeks ıd destroy Greek cities."[1] Identity of race and community interests, a national religion, union against the barbarians, l themes which oratory was soon to make its own, and hich we again meet, three years later, in the famous oration ɛlivered by Gorgias at Olympia, probably in the year 08.[2] The coincidence is instructive, because it enables us surmise in what surroundings these themes originated. ysistrata also recalls the services that Sparta and Athens ıve rendered one another. Sparta drove out the Peisistra-dae; Athens gave help to Sparta when she was in danger ırough the revolt of the Messenians. These memories, these ıoughts must prepare men's minds and incline them to ɛconciliation.

Then comes the agreement proper, which is treated jestingly. thens is to give up Pylus; this is the only thing that seems ɛrious.[3] As for the concessions demanded by Sparta, they ɛfer to the Maliac gulf, to Echinus, and to Megara, but they ɛe travestied in equivocal and absurd obscenities, and it hard to say whether there is anything worth recalling. his is evidently done because the comic poet does not think mself competent to settle the conditions of peace. He is tisfied with a few names, by way of suggestion or example; would have been ridiculous for him to go still further, and wish to substitute himself for the future negotiators, when ɛither side had as yet made any overtures.

It is the moral preparation for peace, the appeal to senti-ents which are to make it possible, that interests him, and ıat he regards as his task. We have just seen that he does ɔt make this appeal in the name of any party. He conceived under the influence of a sentiment that was more Hellenic ıan Athenian, and perhaps more human than Hellenic. At

[1] *Lysistrata*, ll. 1128-1135.

[2] Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. des Alterth.* v. p. 333.

[3] At first sight lines 698-705 might be regarded as advice to annul the pro-bitive decrees against the importation of the goods of neighboring countries. ıt this advice is turned into buffoonery.

this period of his life he seems to have been painfully conscious of the harm Greece was doing to herself by dismembering herself with her own hands; and we seem to divine that, in addition to his old, instinctive repugnance to war, he had a still deeper and nobler sentiment, that was called forth by what he regarded as a crime against humanity.

But at this point a doubt naturally arises about the practical value, and even about the morality of his proposal—a doubt which it is impossible to avoid entertaining. Was it to Athens that these suggestions should have been made? And was the moment well chosen to incline people's minds to peace, when the situation appeared to call for a desperate effort?

It is a delicate matter to answer questions of this sort when one's information is necessarily insufficient. As far as we can judge, it was not the Athenians who were most anxious to continue the war. They did not regain confidence until somewhat later, after Alcibiades' victory. In 411 they would probably have agreed to treat for peace, if their enemies had offered them conditions compatible with their honor. But the latter, conscious of their superiority, and supported by Persia, wished to crush them by destroying their naval supremacy. This was a demand to which Athens could not consent, as long as there remained any hope of regaining the upper hand. Aristophanes surely cannot have thought otherwise, for in his play Lysistrata certainly appears desirous of maintaining the maritime confederacy. Is that not the meaning of the passage, quoted above, in which she likens the cities "sprung from Athens" (*τὰς γε πόλεις ὁπόσαι τῆς γῆς τῆσδ' εἰσὶν ἄποικοι*) to scattered flocks of wool which it was necessary to collect and reunite, in order to weave them into a cloak for the people? But these very cities were at that time seeking to detach themselves from the confederacy; Chios, Miletus, and Lesbos had seceded in 412. The poet does not seem to have appreciated the gravity of these facts. His advice is to bring them back and to unite them through kindliness. He may have had reason to believe that the arrogance and severity of the Athenian people had made their domination hateful to them. But the harm had been done, and it was

certainly a great delusion to think that it could be made good by a kindly policy while war was in full swing. In fact, we can hardly decide at this late day whether the establishment of a confederation of states with equal rights and under the nominal leadership of Athens would ever have been feasible. But we can affirm that, once separated from the metropolis, the cities in question would never have rejoined it of their own free will. The sense of autonomy was much too strong in these small republics, whether they were organized as democracies or as oligarchies.[1] Unless I am mistaken, this is what Aristophanes failed to understand sufficiently. The spirit which pervades the *Lysistrata* is generous and noble, but it is the spirit of a somewhat fanciful poet, who unconsciously fashioned hard reality in the mould of his hopes and dreams.

VI

We have already said that another play by Aristophanes, the *Thesmophoriazusae*, was performed in the same year, 411, at the city Dionysia, and consequently toward the end of March. This was the moment when Athens, on the brink of oligarchical revolution, was smitten by the dread which Thucydides has described.[2] Does the comedy in question give evidence of the poet's sympathy with the party that prepared the way for the revolution?

The play is directed chiefly against Euripides and incidentally against Agathon, and has nothing to do with politics. It cannot even be said to touch upon it on its ethical side, for Aristophanes does not charge Euripides with exerting harmful influence on the society of the day. He simply represents him as the object of women's hatred, on account of the evil he

[1] This is also the opinion of Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1414. He very correctly remarks that, after the Sicilian war the allies thought only of regaining their liberty by freeing themselves from the domination of Athens, and that a policy of kindliness would at that time have been regarded as a sign of weakness.

[2] Thucydides, viii. 66.

has spoken of them. Moreover, far from treating Euripides' utterances as calumnies, he seems rather to set them to his credit, so that all his mockery of Euripides is reduced simply to making him play a ridiculous part and to entertaining us with his attempts to save his father-in-law, Mnesilochus, who has sacrificed himself for him, from the women's vengeance. The satire itself, which at first appears to be aimed at him, is really aimed at womankind. This satire, moreover, is of small import, as it deals with well-known grievances and contemplates no reform.

We might, therefore, pass over this play in complete silence, if it were not for the fact that it contains a few allusions which we shall have to discuss very briefly, in order that we may at least correct certain interpretations that have been given of them.

The meeting which is held by the women is represented as an assembly of the people. It is, therefore, opened, just as the assemblies were, with a solemn prayer pronounced by the herald. The scholiast tells us that this prayer contains certain formulae, borrowed from the maledictions against the Peisistratidae and from the decrees once issued against Hippias.[1] It seems rather hard to believe that the Athenian public were sufficiently well posted about their own history to grasp a parody of such ancient matters at a casual hearing. We must rather suppose that these formulae were still in common use in Aristophanes' time, for certain purposes, and that the poet parodies usages of his own day. But it is surprising to find here a curse "on whoever treats with the Medes."[2] We know, in fact, that in the spring of 411 the Athenian policy was to detach the satraps of Asia Minor, and consequently the king of Persia, from the Peloponnesian Alliance, in order to obtain a subsidy from them—in other words, to form an alliance with them. The argument which Peisander employed in order to prepare the people for the oligarchical revolution was precisely this necessity of recourse

[1] Schol. *Thesmoph.* l. 339.

[2] *Thesmoph.* l. 336 (εἴ τις) . . . ἢ 'πικηρυκεύεται Εὐριπίδῃ Μήδοις τ' ἐπὶ βλάβῃ τινὶ τῇ τῶν γυναικων.

to Persia and the distrust with which the democratic government inspired the great Asiatic monarchy.[1] This argument impressed the people and brought about the first reforms.[2] In consequence of this the Athenians no longer dreamed of cursing those who "wished to treat with the Medes," at the time Aristophanes' play was performed. What then was the poet's meaning? Prof. von Wilamowitz, in a very interesting essay on the date of the *Thesmophoriazusae*,[3] has expressed the opinion that a majority of the citizens—those who were actively engaged in the politics of the day—leaned towards Persia, but that there were still some who were undecided, people with moderate views, sincere and honest patriots, who remained true to the opinions of earlier days; and it is in this category that he places Aristophanes.[4]

This explanation would be sufficient, if it were necessary. But it makes the mistake of taking seriously what is manifestly meant for a joke. The herald curses "whoever shall treat with the Medes *in order to harm the tribe of woman.*" This addition is the keynote of the sentence. At this very moment when it was proposed to treat with the Mede, the poet thought it would be amusing to revive, in a humorous way, a formula, which had perhaps been abandoned for a time but had not yet been forgotten, and which was in amusing contrast to the feeling of the day. Had he wished to make the people regret the abandonment of this formula, he surely would have gone about it in a different way. The attempt, therefore, to find an indication of his political views in this sentence should be abandoned.

A second allusion, which has likewise been taken seriously, seems to me to be of the same order. In the parabasis the women maintain, through the coryphaeus, that they are much superior to the men. "If you wish proof of it," they say, "compare a few of our names with a few of yours." There follows a series of preposterous comparisons, based on plays

[1] Thucydides, viii. 53.

[2] *Ibid.* viii. 54.

[3] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen*, ii. p. 343, "Die Zeit der Thesmophoriazusen."

[4] *Ibid.* p. 351.

on words, which lash the general Charminus, the demagogue Cleophon and others. Then comes this question: "As for Euboulé, which of last year's senators that turned his duties over to another is better than she?"[1] The same scholar sees in these words an allusion to the senate of the year 413-412, which had, in fact, allowed itself to be divested of its authority in favor of the "Probouloi" who have been mentioned above.[2] If this were the case, Aristophanes would be retrospectively censuring the artlessness or the weakness of the democrats. But does the text permit this ingenious interpretation? It speaks of a handing over of power (*παραδούς*), by no means of an abandonment of it, and this handing over was done not by one regularly constituted body to another, but rather by one individual to another individual (*παραδοὺς ἑτέρῳ*). Therefore the allusion is simply to the handing over of a yearly office, by which each retiring senator gave his place to his successor. At this juncture the retiring senators had completed their term of office, and could either themselves judge or have others judge how well they had performed their duties. Did they deserve to be likened to Euboulé, that is, to be characterized as *εὔβουλοι*? This is the ironical question asked by the coryphaeus, and if he chooses the last retiring senate as an example, his only reason is probably the desire to give his joke more aptness by making it refer to a quite recent occurrence. Here again there is nothing to show that Aristophanes leaned one way more than another.

Aside from these scattered allusions, there is nothing in the *Thesmophoriazusae* that savors of politics. From this we may, to say the least, conclude that Aristophanes did not wish to take sides in the grave and painful questions which were then disturbing Athens. And this seems to show that the revolutionary endeavors of the oligarchy did not suit him any better than had the earlier policy of the radical democracy.[3]

[1] *Thesmoph.* l. 808.

[2] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristot. und Athen*, ii. p. 344.

[3] Busolt (*Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1476, note 2) says that "the heavy atmosphere which precedes the storm is reflected in the *Thesmophoriazusae*." I confess that I do not understand to what this view can well refer.

VII

Was there any change in Aristophanes' political views between the years 411 and 405, between the *Thesmophoriazusae* and the *Frogs*? The only document by which we are able to judge of this is the comedy of the *Frogs* itself, performed at the Lenaea under the Archon Callias, toward the end of January, 405.[1] For its proper interpretation, however, we must briefly recall the events of the preceding years.

If Aristophanes, as it would seem, did not share the oligarchical ardor of 411, it is quite probable that he must have been well satisfied with the government of the Five Thousand, which in the autumn of that year succeeded that of the Four Hundred. It is well known how Thucydides praised it, though it is not his usual practice to express approval or blame in his austere and sober chronicle. He says: "In its earlier stages, this Government seems to me to have been the best that Athens had known within my memory, for it was a happy mixture of oligarchy and democracy.[2] This much admired constitution granted full rights of citizenship only to such as were able to equip themselves (*ὁπόσοι καὶ ὅπλα παρέχονται*) and forbade pay for the exercise of any office.[3] In short, the control of the state was thus given almost exclusively to the landed proprietors, not the wealthiest among them, but that conservative and moderate rural democracy, whose opinions and even illusions or somewhat artless prejudices Aristophanes had never ceased to voice from the very beginning of his career.

This government lasted but a short while. The next year, in 410, and probably in consequence of the destruction of the Peloponnesian fleet by Alcibiades at Cyzicus, the reassured people re-established the democracy in its previous form.[4] The radical party again grew influential, and its most striking

[1] Argument i. at the close. [2] Thucydides, viii. 97. [3] *Ibid.*

[4] Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. des Alterth.* iv. § 712-713; Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1538. "Decree of Demophantus, in Andocides," *Mysteries*, 96. For the date see Busolt, *loco cit.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1541, note 1.

orator was Cleophon, a manufacturer of lyres. He was the true successor of Cleon, and very much like him in his violence, and, twelve years after his death, now assumed the same rôle which he had played, and held it to the downfall of Athens in 404.[1] At this time, the passions that had seemed dead revived. Those who had belonged, intimately or remotely, to the oligarchy of the Four Hundred, those who had served it, or who were thought to have favored it, were accused by eager informers. Many of them were condemned to pay heavy fines, and were either ruined or deprived of their rights as citizens.[2] And thus precisely that state of affairs again prevailed which Aristophanes had so courageously criticised at an earlier time and which he continued to regard as odious.

Outside of Athens everything was slowly tending toward the final catastrophe. Athenian successes at sea, though they were sometimes brilliant and unexpected, were not followed up, because there no longer existed either the firmness of will or the resources necessary to continue them. Alcibiades, on his triumphant return to his native land, in 408, after having placed the Hellespont once more under the dominion of Athens, had seen his forces dissipated by the clever policy of Lysander, backed by Cyrus. Furthermore, the defeat of his lieutenant, Antiochus, at Notium before Ephesus, in the spring of 407, had ruined his popularity, and at the same time destroyed the hopes of Athens. Following upon this reverse, the Athenian fleet was forced, during the year 407, to split up into light squadrons, in order to conduct a campaign of privateering and pillage, which at least assured the pay and support of her armament. In 406, it is true, Athens made a great and successful effort to succor Conon when he was besieged at Methymna, and the fleet which she organized on this occasion won a brilliant victory in September of the same year, near the islands of Arginusae, between Lesbos and the coast of Asia. But even this victory only put off the catastrophe. A few months after this, Lysander, entrusted with

[1] Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. des Alterth.* iv. § 713.

[2] One of the most instructive documents on this subject is the *Oration for Polystratus*, in the collection of legal speeches attributed to Lysias.

the task of making good the defeat of Callicratidas, had reorganized the Peloponnesian fleet, while the Athenian generals, uncertain about their armament, dared not take the initiative. And yet the Athenian democracy, under the influence of Cleophon, was more intractable than ever. It had rejected the overtures of peace which Sparta had made after the battle of Arginusae, and, not satisfied with sacrificing the victorious generals to a fanatical superstition which certain politicians basely stirred up, it made itself odious by the inhuman measures which it decreed against those of the enemy who had been taken as prisoners.[1]

It is at this juncture, in the autumn of 406, that Aristophanes must have written his *Frogs*.

The three competitors who took part in the comic competition at the Lenaea in January 405 were Aristophanes, who got the first prize; Phrynichus, who got second place with a play entitled the *Muses*; and finally Plato, who only secured the third place with his *Cleophon*. The title of this last comedy, of which we know very little else, is worthy of note. It proves that, notwithstanding the prevailing exasperation, a poet could then, as previously, level his attacks directly against the real head of the government, against the inspirer of the politics of the day; and the rare fragments of the *Cleophon* certainly show how insulting its contents were. It is important that we take this fact into consideration, in order to appreciate the comparative moderation of Aristophanes.

It is not to be denied that the *Frogs* contains bitter personal attacks on the demagogues; the play, indeed, as a whole, has a satirical tone that must not be ignored. But these personal attacks are scattered—they are shafts hurled in passing, and the satire in general is aimed at the moral condition of the entire city and not at its leaders or advisers.

Let us note first the poet's attitude toward Cleophon. Twenty years earlier the play would undoubtedly have been directed against him personally or against his policy. In the *Frogs* he is mentioned only casually. In the beginning of the parabasis (ll. 674-685) the chorus makes fun of his babbling,

[1] Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. des Alterth.* iv. § 733.

and of his foreign birth, which is shown by his speech, and prophesies that he will shortly be sentenced, an outcome which it evidently longs for with its whole heart. At the end of the play, Aeschylus is entrusted with the task of ridding the city of him (l. 1500 *et seq.*). That is all. Other demagogues, Archedemus, Archinus, Agyrrhius, are incidentally attacked in satirical allusions of a similar kind (ll. 367-368, 416, 588). In another passage Cleon, who has been dead sixteen years, and Hyperbolus, who has been dead five, are humorously represented as being, in Hades, the protectors of insignificant folk. On the whole, all this is rather inoffensive. On the other hand, Aristophanes hurls some bitter shafts at Theramenes, whose political leanings must nevertheless have been much the same as his own, but who, like a coward, had thrown upon his superiors his own responsibility in the affair at Arginusae (ll. 540 and 967-970). These passages, and a few others that are of the same kind but more obscure, are indications of personal opinions that should be noted, but the fact that they are of relatively small importance suggests the reflexion that Aristophanes was at this time less disposed than formerly to regard this or that politician as chief author of public misfortunes, whatever else he may have thought of him. Behind the acts of individuals he descried more general and more deep-seated causes, and these his play sought to expose.

He no longer attacks even institutions or their abuses, as he had formerly done in the *Knights* or in the *Wasps*. At most, we might call attention to a sharp word about the "two obols," and this is more of a joke than of a criticism (l. 141).[1] This is a mere detail, without consequence. The underlying intention of the play is of quite a different nature.

It appears chiefly in the comparison between Aeschylus and Euripides, which forms the subject of the play. As we know, this comparison, which is entirely to the disadvantage

[1] In this the scholiast mistakenly discovers an allusion to the salary of the judges, with which we have nothing to do here. Moreover, the poet merely remarks what great power this little sum has among the dead, just as it has among the living. For the two obols see Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1544. It was a daily grant of two obols, accorded by the state to poor citizens; this grant was made in 410 at Cleophon's suggestion.

of Euripides, is at the same time literary and moral; but the moral part seems to be of greater consequence to the poet than the literary, and precisely herein lies the novelty of his point of view. For a very long time he had shown himself an emphatic opponent of Euripides; he had already made fun of him in the *Acharnians*, the earliest of his extant comedies. He continued to make fun of him in the *Clouds*, the *Peace*, and in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, to say nothing of the plays that have been lost. In all this ridicule it was especially Euripides' art, his dramatic effects that were made fun of. His moral influence was referred to only incidentally. Here, quite the contrary is the case. From the point of view of art, the comedy might make us hesitate between the two poets. Although Aristophanes appears to prefer Aeschylus, he is not above making his audience laugh at his archaic style and his obscure grandiloquence. On the other hand, again, even though he ridicules certain of Euripides' methods, he shows, by the utterances of Dionysus, that he recognizes the fascination he had for people. But so far as moral influence is concerned, the comparison is as decidedly as possible in favor of Aeschylus. If we listen to the comic poet, it would almost seem as if the victories of the Persian wars had been of his making, whereas the mournful state of Athenian affairs in 405 must be laid at Euripides' door.

"Consider," says Aeschylus to Dionysus, "what style of men he received from me when he began to write—heroic six foot fellows, citizens who did not shirk their duty (μὴ διαδρασιπολίτας), not mercenary souls, deceitful and wily, such as they are now." And he reminds him of the warlike spirit which the tragedy of the *Seven* breathed. "Whoever saw it longed to be a warrior." In this wise he taught the Athenians how to vanquish their foes, by implanting in their hearts the desire to do noble deeds (ll. 1026-1027). He presented on the stage for their imitation heroes whom each of the spectators strove to outdo at the first call of the trumpet (ll. 1041-1042). That is what Athenians loved then, and what they ought to have kept on loving (l. 1025). Instead of that, they have lent their ears to the seductive and corrupting

fictions of Euripides. And he, by portraying to them a race that was morally lower, has also lowered and impaired their souls (l. 1062 *et seq.*); the rich are no longer willing to sacrifice their wealth for their country (ll. 1065-1066); now the young think of nothing but learning the art of talking—they have abandoned the palaestra for the debauch; and even the sailors, who formerly were rugged and subject to discipline, have become subtle talkers who know how to refute their captains (ll. 1069-1073). So the city is overrun with hireling scribes and buffoons, who fool the people with their apish tricks (ll. 1083-1086).

This brutal description given by the aged Aeschylus forms the centre of the play. There is no doubt that, with due allowance for comic exaggeration, it expresses the poet's own thought. But the harshness and the seriousness of these reproaches are such as to occasion surprise. Between 413 and 404 Athens appears to have displayed a desperate energy. One might think that she would have been downcast after her reverses in Sicily. She had neither fleet nor army left. And yet she held the foe at bay for nine years after that. Neither defeat nor defection could force her to surrender. On two occasions, in 408 and in 406, she seemed to be almost on the point of regaining the upper hand, and she maintained this indomitable resistance to the point of utter exhaustion and at the cost of the most painful sacrifices. At no time, perhaps, in her entire history, did she display a stronger will or a more obstinate courage.

Shall it be said, then, that Aristophanes was mistaken, that under the influence of a prejudice he pointed out imaginary failings? This is hardly credible of a mind which had repeatedly shown itself to be singularly perspicacious. We must be on our guard against permitting ourselves to be misled by appearances.

Nothing is more striking in the behavior of the Athenians at this time than the brusque and, so to speak, sudden character of their decisions. As soon as they are in imminent danger a sort of desperate exaltation possesses them, and they make an extraordinary effort which saves them for the time;

but this effort is never sustained. In the main, it almost seems as if they had never had a clear conception of the conditions of success. Was success possible? There is room for doubt. At all events, there was no chance of securing it save on one condition: its enormous difficulties must first be appreciated, and if an earnest attempt was to be made to overcome them, this policy must be backed up by continuity of effort and of sacrifice, which could be secured only by the absolute and unswerving devotion of every citizen to the common cause. It was just such devotion that was lacking. In days of exceptional peril, those who were most energetic or most violent in the assembly, carried the others with them, partly through enthusiasm, partly by intimidation. In this way desperate resolutions were taken which had to be carried out subsequently, notwithstanding regrets and attempts at evasion. These were, in a manner, the convulsions of patriotism. Moreover, many private interests were thus satisfied, for the prevailing destitution led many poor people, who were driven to desperation by misery, to take advantage of the opportunity to earn a penny at the expense of allies on whom contributions were levied and of the enemy who were pillaged. Notwithstanding all this, it must be admitted, that true civic spirit was degenerating.

The testimony of Thucydides, Xenophon and Plato would have to be absolutely rejected, were we disposed to deny the extent to which individualism had been developed in Greece, and especially at Athens, since the beginning of the Peloponnesian war. It had at first spread through the better classes, under the influence of the sophists. Many independent minds, in their search for the foundations of law and ethics, had thought that they rested upon selfish interest. When they sought to make their principles harmonize with their discovery, they even constituted selfish interest, which was often understood in a rather gross sense, their rule of life. Ideas, such as these, when they have once been proclaimed, quickly spread from class to class. Without this quiet revolution, which took place in the days of Aristophanes, there would be no historical explanation for the rather lax morality of the century that

followed. Demosthenes hints at it, the new comedy pictures it, and it became crystallized in Epicureanism. Aristophanes witnessed its growth, and he, at least, vaguely understood its seriousness and the causes that led to it. In his eyes, Aeschylus and Euripides, as they are represented in the *Frogs*, stand for the two states of mind through which Athens had passed successively. In this concise and necessarily exaggerated comparison, Euripides stands for restless intellectualism, bent on analysis, incapable, at bottom, of finding satisfaction, but undermining moral discipline because of its inability to assign an indisputable reason for its existence, and consequently giving free scope to the egotistical instincts which fret at social exigencies.

But, after all, did the poet in the *Frogs* wage war on democracy? It seems impossible to maintain that he did. The tendency which he criticises was really of aristocratic origin. Little by little it had become universal. Aristophanes criticised it freely, without discriminating between classes; but in fact the Athenian aristocracy might have come in for its share of his criticism quite as much as the common people. On the other hand, when considered in the light of its consequences, this tendency was quite as much out of keeping with the democracy as with the aristocracy, if the rule of the majority is indeed the form of government which can least of all get on without the devotion of all to the common cause. The underlying spirit of the *Frogs*, then, is essentially rather ethical and social than, properly speaking, political.

VIII

It is true that, side by side with this general thesis, the same play contains some more precise and directly practical counsels of a slightly different character, which finally demand examination.

First, then, there is the famous parabasis, which, according to the anonymous author of the argument, was so much admired by Aristophanes' contemporaries. He informs us, on

the testimony of Dicaearchus,[1] that it secured the play the exceptional honor of a second performance. The band of the initiated address the audience through their spokesman, the coryphaeus, and their very character imparts something serious and religious to their counsels; the poet chooses to make a point of this fact. Evidently he does not wish to have his thoughts appear to be the programme of a party. He offers them as a sort of solemn instruction, inspired by unselfish patriotism, to men who piously preserve their country's holiest traditions—an instruction which is even, as it were, associated with the celebration of the mysteries.

They say, "It is right that the sacred chorus (*τὸν ἱερὸν χορόν*) should give the city good counsels and wise instruction. In the first place, we believe in re-establishing equality between citizens, and in putting an end to terror (*ἐξισῶσαι τοὺς πολίτας κἀφελεῖν τὰ δείματα*). And if any have done wrong, misled by the intrigues of Phrynichus, I declare that they should be allowed to discharge the accusations against them and atone for their former mistakes (*αἰτίαν ἐκθεῖσι λῦσαι τὰς πρότερον ἁμαρτίας*).[2] The purport of this first injunction is clear. Aristophanes here puts in a claim in the name of a large class of citizens who were at that time treated as suspects,[3] all those, namely, who were suspected of having favored the oligarchy of 411. No charges were lodged against them on this score, which was not of a kind to warrant a legal process; but they were excluded from public functions, or even summoned to court on some pretext, and the democratic tribunals loaded them down with fines. And so, incessantly threatened with ruin, imprisonment and dis-

[1] Argument i. *οὕτω δὲ ἐθαυμάσθη διὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ παράβασιν ὥστε καὶ ἀνεδιδάχθη, ὥς φησι Δικαίαρχος.*

[2] *Frogs*, ll. 686-690 *Αἰτίαν ἐκθεῖναι* is obscure. This verb is properly applied to a ship which disembarks its passengers or its freight (Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, l. 5). I believe that Aristophanes compares suspected persons, who are under the cloud of vague charges which they are not able to get rid of, to ships which have not received permission to discharge their freights.

[3] See orations 20 and 25 of Lysias and Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 353. I think, as may be gathered from the translation given above, that Gilbert has not quite caught the exact meaning of the passage.

honor, without ever being able to clear themselves of the fundamental, but unavowed, grievance which weighed them down, they endured a veritable reign of terror. It is this odious and lamentable state of affairs, which was well adapted to perpetuate enmity and to keep alive dissensions in the city, that the poet courageously censures in this passage, with a moderation and a candor which do him great honor. There can be no doubt that he had friends in this persecuted class; but that, after all, is of no great consequence for the appreciation of his words, for he merely asks for justice and equality. What he claims for them, is the right to clear themselves, the right once more to become citizens like other people. Unless, indeed, we assume that hatred and distrust must be the moral temper of a democracy, it is hard to deny that his advice was compatible with the public weal.

The coryphaeus goes on: "In the second place, I say that no man who is a citizen of the state should have his civic rights curtailed (*εἶτ' ἄτιμον φημὶ χρῆναι μηδέν' εἶν' ἐν τῇ πόλει*). For is not the situation disgraceful? Certain people here, who were formerly slaves, are ranked among the Plataeans, because they took part in a single naval battle. I approve of this reward, to be sure, and have not a word to say against it; indeed, it is the only sensible thing you have done. But ought you not, after that, pardon a single unfortunate act of those who have so many times fought with you at sea, as their fathers have done before them, and who are of your own race, when they beg for forgiveness?"[1] This passage refers to the citizens who had served as hoplites in 411, under the Four Hundred, and who had then remained at Athens. We know from a statement of Andocides that they had been placed under a partial *ἀτιμία*, and had been deprived of the right of speaking in the assembly and of being elected into the senate.[2] What Aristophanes asks for, therefore, is

[1] *Frogs*, ll. 693-699.

[2] Andocides, *Mysteries*, 75, l. 693, seems to me to have been commonly misunderstood, and especially by Gilbert, *Beiträge*, pp. 352-354. Aristophanes cannot ask that there should no longer be any *ἄτιμοι* at Athens; for *ἀτιμία* was frequently declared for causes in which he had no reason to take an interest.

the abolition of this punishment, for which, in fact, there was no possible justification after an interval of six years, and which could only serve to keep the memory of former dissensions painfully alive. Sincere and cordial reconciliation in the presence of imminent danger—that is the essential feature of his programme, which he expresses at the close of this exhortation: "Do ye then, whom nature has made so clever, allay your anger. Let us seek heartily to win over all our brothers by recognizing them as citizens, without restriction, as long as they fight with us on Athenian ships. For if we go on humiliating them, if we encourage our city in its arrogance and senseless pride, now when we are at the mercy of the raging waves, I greatly fear that posterity will condemn us."[1]

The second part of the same parabasis goes still further; it may be regarded as constituting a regular claim in favor of a political party. I translate it in full: "Many a time we have said to ourselves that the city treated her best educated citizens (*τοὺς καλοὺς τε κἀγαθούς*) as she treats her old coins in relation to her newly minted gold pieces. We no longer use our old coins, whose alloy was surely not bad, but which were quite the best of all—the only ones that were honestly struck and were recognized as excellent everywhere, among Greeks and barbarians, and we prefer this poor copper, coined quite recently and so badly struck. Just so we treat with disdain those of our fellow-citizens whom we know to be of good stock and conduct, just and cultured men, who were educated in the palaestra, in the choruses and in the service of the Muses. But we make every possible use of men of bad alloy, of strangers, of a race of slaves, worthless sons of worthless fathers, Athenians of yesterday, whom the city formerly would never have stooped to use as expiatory victims. Believe me, ye foolish people! Mend your ways and make use once more of respectable men. If you succeed, they will bring you honor.

He demands something quite different: that there should no longer be any *ἄτιμοι* among the citizens (*ἐν τῇ πόλει*), that is, that it should not be possible to be placed under partial *ἀτιμία* while at the same time remaining a citizen.

[1] *Frogs*, ll. 700-705.

If you fail, good judges will at least say of you that, if you had to be shipwrecked, you did not cling to bad timber while you were drowning."[1]

For an entirely clear understanding of the purport of these words, we should have to be much better acquainted than we are with the details of the domestic history of Athens at this time. But, in default of precise facts, there are at least probabilities that we must consider.

Aristophanes in this passage reproaches the people for systematically excluding an entire class of citizens from participation in public affairs, and that on account of their good qualities. Rightly or wrongly, he alleges that the democracy of 405 had a preconceived distrust of well-educated men, and a sort of instinctive leaning toward politicians of the opposite kind. As for the advice he gives, he does not challenge institutions, but merely the manner in which they are administered. He would have the people lend a more willing ear, in the assemblies, to men who were attached to their native soil by solid family interests, by old domestic traditions and inborn affection, and would have them choose such men to be their generals or their negotiators. Had his purpose been revolutionary, had he conceived the secret plan of substituting an oligarchy for the democracy, it is hard to believe that he would thus have brought it forward in a versified speech, openly delivered in the theatre. His counsels could have a practical effect only on two conditions: in the first place, they would have to respond to a latent sentiment that was entertained by a large part of his audience; and, in the second place, they would have to be such as could be adopted without too great difficulty. We may, therefore, conclude that, on the one hand, the facts which he criticises were at least tacitly admitted to be true by a large part of his audience, and, on the other hand, that his suggestion contained nothing which appeared offensive to them or shocked them. For all these reasons I think the passage just cited ought to be interpreted with the same simplicity with which it is written. We ought not to see anything more in it than the poet has put into it.

[1] *Frogs*, ll. 718-737.

Freely and in merry mood he gives the people good counsel, he does his duty as a conservative and friend of harmony, and warns the democracy against an exclusive and intolerant temper. By speaking thus, he virtually urged them to avoid the catastrophe by which they were to be overwhelmed.

IX

It will be recalled that the play ends with a sort of political consultation. After each of the two rival poets, Aeschylus and Euripides, has pleaded his own cause and has disparaged his adversary, Dionysus, at a loss how to decide, asks them their opinion about the political situation at Athens.

The first question concerns Alcibiades, who at that time stayed away from Athens of his own free will. "In the first place," says the god, "what does each of you think of Alcibiades? For the city is laboring hard to bring forth a decision about him." "But what does she think of him?" says Euripides. "What she thinks of him?" replies Dionysus. "She longs for him, but she hates him, and yet would much like to have him back. But do you tell us what you propose." Thereupon Euripides makes a severe reply: "I hate the citizen who is slow to serve his country but quick to injure it, full of resources for himself but powerless to serve his state." As for Aeschylus, he expresses a proverbial thought in oracular form: "It is the wisest course not to let a lion grow to strength in a state; but if one has let him grow, one must humor him" (*τοῖς τρόποις ὑπηρετεῖν*).[1]

To what extent should either of these opinions be regarded as that of the poet himself? Euripides, it is said, is his adversary and represents the corrupt ideas of the day; Aristophanes makes every effort to render him ridiculous; the severe opinion of Alcibiades which he here attributes to him must be just the opposite of his own. This is treating the matter much too simply. In fact, Euripides is

[1] *Frogs*, ll. 1422-1433.

very far from talking nothing but nonsense in this play; many of his criticisms of Aeschylus undeniably contain a measure of truth. This is true also of the opinion which he expresses here. Had Aristophanes wished to constitute himself an advocate of Alcibiades, he would have been very careful not to allow him to be criticised, in terms so just and of such import, even by an adversary. He has given us a drastic picture of his absolute selfishness, his lack of patriotism, his vain and chimerical promises, and he has pictured them without introducing any apologetic reply to destroy or diminish the effect of the reproach. And so this reproach remains in its entirety. Now Aeschylus, whom we are willing to regard as the mouthpiece of Aristophanes, nevertheless advises his fellow-citizens, in metaphorical but sufficiently clear terms, to put up with this bad citizen. This was probably the poet's opinion. Doubtless he, like many others, thought that in the prevailing supreme danger Alcibiades was the only man who, by his talent as general and diplomat, by his courage tempered with prudence, in a word, by his genius could still save Athens. And herein he probably was right.[1] We know that the decisive battle at Aegospotami was lost because the Athenian generals refused to listen to the warning of Lysander's clear-headed adversary. If Alcibiades had been in command at that time, Athens might have saved her fleet, and perhaps even once more have destroyed that of her enemy, and she would thus have been in position to make peace on honorable terms, assuming that she had possessed the good sense to do so. It should also be observed that Aristophanes, with Aeschylus for spokesman, by no means advised the people to prostrate themselves before Alcibiades, and to make him their master. At this time Alcibiades was neither an exile nor beyond the pale of the law; he was under suspicion, and, as he was aware of this fact, he stayed securely in his Thracian stronghold.[2] The poet limited himself to suggesting the idea of entrusting

[1] Busolt, *Griech. Gesch.* iii. 2nd part, p. 1579, "The deposition of Alcibiades was a mistake which essentially contributed in leading Athens on shortly to her ruin." Cf. Thucydides, vi. 15, 4.

[2] Lysias, *Against Alcibiades*, i. 38. Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. des Alterth.* iv. § 723.

m with the command of the army on legitimate terms, thout subjecting him to too rigorous a moral test.[1]

The consultation is not yet finished. Dionysus puts a ɔond question to the two rivals: "What measures of safety ve you for the city?" Euripides replies: "It would be our lvation to trust that which to-day inspires us with distrust, d to distrust that which inspires us with confidence." The ɔa, as such, is not all obscure notwithstanding its enigmatical m. Moreover, at the request of the god, Euripides expresses still more clearly: "If we were to distrust the citizens ıom we now trust, and if we were to make use of those ıom we do not make use of, we might possibly be saved."[2] ristophanes here merely repeats what he had said before. distrust the regular demagogues, Cleophon and a few others, listen, on the contrary, to those who were then regarded th suspicion, the moderates, the old adherents of the limited mocracy of the Five Thousand—herein he saw, if not the arantee of salvation, yet at least the best chance of it. It worth noticing that this excellent advice is given by ıripides, a fact which supports the observations made above. eschylus goes on uttering oracles: "The city will be saved ıen the citizens shall consider the enemy's country as their rn and their country as that of the enemy—their ships as eir true wealth, and their so-called wealth a delusion."[3] As e scholiast observes, these words, with their intentional scurity, appear to be nothing else than a repetition of the rmula in which Pericles' policy was summed up: leave the ritory of Attica to the invader, but as an offset devastate s territory by constant raids; gain all means of subsistence rough the fleet, by employing it either to exact tribute from e allies or to ensure the arrival of provisions. As for the it phrase, "regard wealth as a delusion" (*ἀπορίαν τὸν πόρον*), it has any meaning at all, it must mean that Athens would ake a mistake were she to rely upon her own resources

The popular assembly of 408 had bestowed a kind of dictatorship upon him nophon, *Hellenica*, i. 4, 20). Aristophanes, at any rate, did not demand nuch as that.

Frogs, ll. 1443-1448.

[3] *Ibid.* ll. 1463-1465.

once she allowed her power at sea to decline. But I, for my part, should be more inclined to believe that it is simply an empty antithesis, intended to imitate an oracular formula.

Should Aeschylus' counsels be regarded as those of Aristophanes'? At any rate, there was nothing new or personal in them; the chief criticism that can be made of them is that they were very hard to put into practice at a time when Athens saw the confederation breaking up through the defection of her allies, and when she was no longer sufficiently powerful to carry the war into her enemy's territory. Why should we not rather assume that it amused Aristophanes to allot to the old poet a magniloquent judgment, but one that did not apply to current events? He makes him speak, on the eve of Aegospotami, as Themistocles spoke on the day after Salamis, and, if I am not mistaken, he indicates his real thought in Dionysus' observation: "Perfect! But this is the sort of thing that only the judge can swallow." This means: "That is very fine, but I should be the only one who would care for this advice. I doubt whether the Athenian people would have the desire or the means to take advantage of it."[1] If this view is correct, the only serious part of the consultation is Euripides' answer. We have seen that it amounts merely to a protest against the extremists, quite in harmony with Aristophanes' customary views.

X

Here, then, we have Aristophanes' political attitude as it manifests itself in 405 in the *Frogs*; we got a glimpse of it in 414 in the *Birds*, in 411 in the *Lysistrata*, and, up to a certain point, in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. In its essential features it conforms with the attitude he had taken at the time of the

[1] *Frogs*, l. 1466. The interpretation which I adopt is, I believe, that of the second scholiast (Ἐγὼ μόνος ὁ δικάζων ὑμῖν κατὰ νοῦν ταῦτα λαμβάνω καὶ ἀποδέχομαι). But he admits, like the first scholiast, that there is another meaning παρ' ὑπόνοιαν. This line would then be a criticism of the Athenian courts, which absorbed all the resources of the state. This would be admissible only if the word χρήματα were found in the preceding sentence.

war of Archidamus. His ideal does not appear to have changed: it is always that of a frankly democratic city, but one in which the greatest influence would have been in the hands of a moderate element, of the class of the hoplites who were able to furnish their own equipment or of the small landowners—in a word, of the rural democracy. But while this ideal always remains the same, it shows itself in rather a different way in this period from the preceding. While the poet continues to fight the influential demagogues, he does not attribute to any of them the baneful importance which he formerly attributed to Cleon, nor does he aim at any particular reform in the state. What painfully engages his attention is the prevailing state of mind, the blind exaltation which possesses the people in the assembly, the violent hatred between citizens, the profound schism which threatens to become irretrievable. The idea of harmony, of sincere reconciliation, of close union with a view to the common good, is what constantly inspires him and what suggests to him some of the best passages he ever wrote. As we know, this policy prevailed for a moment, but it was after the reverse of Aegospotami, when Lysander's fleet blockaded Piraeus and Agis' army, having advanced from Deceleia, shut off all roads on land. It was then that the people at last decided to revoke the extreme, vindictive measures which they had maintained up to that time.[1] They recognized too late what harm they had done themselves. At all events, on that day the author of the *Lysistrata* and of the *Frogs* was vindicated. He had not possessed sufficient influence to force his passionate and thoughtless fellow-citizens into useful activity at the opportune moment, but he did have the merit of discovering what was right and of saying it frankly and in beautiful words.

[1] Decree of Patroclides (Andocides, *Mysteries*, 73-79; Xenophon, *Hellenica*, ii. 2, § 2); Gilbert, *Beiträge*, p. 396.

CHAPTER V

LAST PERIOD

ECCLESIAZUSAE. PLUTUS

THE events of the year 404 and 403—the crumbling of the power of Athens, the tyranny of the Thirty, the restoration of the democracy—seem to have changed the position of the political parties at Athens very profoundly. Or rather, if one gives the name of party only to a political group organized with a view to a definite activity, there were no longer any parties, properly so called, in that city after this time. Not only did a restoration of the oligarchy henceforth appear impossible to the very people who would have desired it, but they did not even think any longer of seriously reforming the democracy. After the trials it had victoriously endured, it had become the only possible form of government for the city of Athens. Whether people liked it or not, there remained no other course than to accept it, such as it was, and to put up with it as best they could. Henceforward schemes for constitutional reforms were devoid of all practical influence, and had no place save in the discussions of philosophers. On the stage they would have appeared ridiculous, or would not have been listened to.

It is not surprising that the last plays of Aristophanes should reflect this state of mind. To this period we may refer four of his comedies: the *Ecclesiazusae* and the *Plutus*, which may still be read in our day, and the *Aeolosicon* and the *Cocalos*, which have been lost. We know that the last two plays were mythological parodies. How shall we define the others?

They both treat of social questions,—respectively, the organization of the family and the division of wealth, and so it seems that we might properly call them social comedies.[1] And yet, one consideration deters us from doing this. To call them by that name virtually implies the idea of a more or less defined doctrine. Now, do these plays contain a doctrine? It must be admitted that there is reason to doubt it. We search for the poet's dominant idea behind his fanciful creation without much assurance of finding it, so quickly does he abandon the arguments which he seemed to promise us. Many of the scenes evidently have no other aim than to amuse the audience. One has the feeling that it would be rather foolish to take them seriously. And yet, other scenes throw a vivid light on certain aspects of the problem advanced, they reveal the interest the poet takes in them, and make plain, in part at least, what he thinks about them. If, therefore, the name social comedy appear too ambitious for this vague and confused, nay, even contradictory and incomplete style of composition, let us, at least, say that we here see a comedy with a social tendency, doubtless more imaginative than philosophical, but yet not devoid of a certain philosophy.

Moreover, of whatever kind the comedy is, our task should be to determine its aims as closely as possible, and to show what relation they bear either to the known views of the poet or to the circumstances and the surroundings in which they arose.

I

It is fairly certain that the *Ecclesiazusae* was performed in 392, at the Lenaea.[2]

[1] For the former of these plays consult Poehlmann, *Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus und Sozialismus*, München, 1901, ii. Ch. i. section 1, from whom I have borrowed several observations. For the whole question see Auguste Couat, *Aristophane et l'ancienne Comédie attique*, Paris, 1889, Ch. v.

[2] We no longer have the didascalia of the play. But in line 193 Aristophanes alludes to a confederation which Athens has recently joined; the scholiast refers to Philochoros, and explains that the allusion is to the alliance, concluded *two years before*, between the "Lacedaemonians" and the Boeotians. The word "Lacedaemonians" should evidently be emended, for the poet

At the opening of the play the circumstances have a certain analogy with those of the *Lysistrata*. The women of Athens, having made up their minds that the men are badly mismanaging the affairs of state, have made a plot at the Scirophoria to get control into their own hands. At the very beginning of the play they carry out their plan under the leadership of Praxagora. Disguised as men, they slip into the assembly, occupy almost all the seats before daybreak, and after having thus become mistresses of the ballot, they pass a decree which turns over the government to them. What use are they going to make of it? Praxagora, their leader, establishes community of goods and community of women; the latter are to belong to all, according to regulations which are to ensure equality among them. We expect to see how the consequences of this twofold decision work out. In fact we see only a few of them very vivaciously pictured, but they are more or less in the nature of special cases. A silly fellow hastens to get rid of all that he owns, in order to obey the law; a sceptic is more cautious and prefers to wait. Both characters are amusingly true to life. But what is to be the outcome of their conduct? We are not told. The other kind of communism is dealt with in the same way, in the form of an incident: furious rivalry between an old woman and a young girl. The old woman has the regulations in her favor, the young girl has youth in hers, and it seems certain that the regulations will not be the stronger; but even this outcome is evaded as soon as it has been suggested. As for other consequences, which would concern the family, the city, morality —the comedy entirely ignores them.

speaks of an alliance made, not against Athens, but by her. "Athenians" has therefore properly been substituted for "Lacedaemonians." The alliance here referred to is that of the year 395, concluded between Athens, Thebes, Corinth, and Argos, against the Lacedaemonian hegemony. It follows that the play was performed in the year 393-392. On the other hand, the statement is made in two passages (ll. 18 and 59) that the conspiracy of the women was made at the Scira: from this fact the conclusion has been drawn that the play was performed at the Lenaea, the first festival after the Scira which would admit of a competition of comedies; but this is not so certain.

This brief outline is sufficient to show how far the play is from being a social comedy, in the true sense of the word. But let us go somewhat more into detail.

It is worthy of remark, first of all, that there is no mention whatever of communism in the entire first part. When we compare the *Ecclesiazusae* with the *Lysistrata* in this regard, the difference is striking. In the *Lysistrata* the purpose of the women's conspiracy is promptly made clear (ll. 30-40, 50); the object of their plot is to put an end to the war. The whole action of the play, from the very start, tends toward that end only. In the *Ecclesiazusae* the case is quite different. The women seek, by a ruse, to have a discretionary power given them. But to what use is that power to be put? They do not seem to know themselves. It is not before line 590, that is, before the second half of the play, that Praxagora suddenly reveals her plan of action: and it is only in the last third of the play that we see it applied. As a result the discussion of this plan of action and, above all, the portrayal of its effects are necessarily curtailed. What is the reason for this curious structure, which forced the poet to sacrifice many phases of his subject, and perhaps some of the most comical ones?

We discover the reason for it when we examine this first part more closely. In reality, it is of much greater importance to the author than one would at first be tempted to believe, and it owes this importance to the fact that it is a trenchant satire on contemporary life. Later on will follow fancy and the representation in caricature of certain Utopias, whose nature we shall have to determine. Here we are in the midst of Athenian life, and the men and the events of the day are the chief material of the comedy.

Athens, which had been so sorely tried in 404, was then once more engaged in a distressing war with Sparta. With Thebes, Corinth and Argos as her allies, she had been struggling for more than two years to rid herself of the hegemony of her rival. The fortunes of war had varied. After defeating Lysander at Haliartus, the allies had been defeated at Nemea and at Coronea in 394. From that time

on hostilities were prolonged in the neighborhood of Corinth without decisive advantage to either side. The alliance with Persia and with King Evagoras of Cyprus, as well as the naval victory of Conon at Cnidus, had seemed to indicate an unexpected return of Athens' good fortune. Thanks to the king's subsidies, she had been enabled to rebuild the walls of Piraeus and the long walls; she had even built a few new ships, and she began once more to cut a figure in the Aegean Sea. Notwithstanding all this her position remained very precarious. The Peloponnesian war had exhausted her. Many of her rich citizens had grown poor; almost everybody suffered from lack of means, and yet the crushing cost of the war had to be met. The disbursements weighed heavily on the landed proprietors and on the manufacturers: on the other hand, they constituted about the only means of subsistence for the mass of the people, in the form of salary or pay; and, as a consequence, the latter were not at all anxious for peace. In order to continue the war, they kept increasing forced contributions and confiscations. This resulted in profound distress and in material as well as moral discomfort.[1] Precisely such is the city that Aristophanes presents to our view.

It is governed in a deplorable manner—that is the essential point. "When we consider them, the decisions of the assembly," says one of the women, "are as incoherent as those of drunken men."[2] And so the conspirators are going to try to take the management of affairs into their own hands, "in order that the city may enjoy a bit of prosperity. For at present," says Praxagora, "we are sailing with neither sails nor oars."[3] They rehearse the part they are to play in the assembly. After various episodes, we see Praxagora improvising a model speech, by way of setting an example. This is the principal episode of the first part.

This whole speech is nothing but a series of allusions to the domestic and foreign policy of Athens which are often rather

[1] The position of Athens at this time has been especially well set forth by Ed. Meyer (*Gesch. des Alterthums*, v. ll. 847-866) who follows Xenophon, Diodorus, Plutarch, and, above all, Andocides and Lysias.

[2] *Ecclesiazusae*, ll. 137-139.

[3] *Ibid.* ll. 108-109.

ıtelligible to us. The first of them are general. "I see," the orator, "that our city has very bad leaders. If by ıce one of them behaves himself for a day, he turns ıstable for ten. Do you trust another? He will do even se. It is not easy to give good advice to those who will accept it, to a people like you, who always distrust those wish to do you a good turn, and are always ready to pay t to those who do not care for you."[1] It appears that, in e trenchant, though obscure, words, Aristophanes doubtless ıed to criticise the statesmen of the restored democracy, more particularly the incoherency of the people, their lack ogical thought, their sudden changes of humor, all which, ıis mind, made impossible all continuity of view and action. makes fun of the zeal which the citizens display in coming he assembly since the demagogue Agyrrhius has allotted a y payment of three obols to each that attends. "There a time when we did not hold assemblies at all, and in e days we thought Agyrrhius a thorough blackguard. vadays we hold them, and those who draw their pay cannot words enough to praise him, while those who get none are that the penalty of death would not be too severe for e who demand pay for their attendance."[2] It is plain that ıtophanes rather shares the views of the latter. Those mblies of the poor and unemployed, who were attracted by three obols, did not please him at all, and we feel that he very ready to speak his mind about them casually and in ımorous way—a clever way of extenuating a satire which ertheless retained its import.

ncoherent at home and equally incoherent abroad, Athens for rather more than two years, the ally of three powerful es; but she was not able to profit even by such an alliance. ided against herself, she vacillates between two opinions. hen we discussed the present alliance," says Praxagora, "it said that the city was lost if we did not make it. It was e, and people disliked it; the orator who put it through lenly took to flight and disappeared. As for sending ships ea, the poor man advises that, not the rich nor the farmers.

[1] *Ecclesiazusae*, ll. 176-182. [2] *Ibid.* ll. 183-188.

You hated the Corinthians and they you. Now they are friendly to you. Do you be friendly too."[1] The few lines which follow are unfortunately corrupt, and in those which precede many details still vex the commentators. But their general purport, at least, is sufficiently clear. Praxagora's criticisms lead to their own logical conclusion. The whole trouble arises from the fact that too many of the citizens think of nothing but getting money at expense of the state, either by multiplying meetings of the assembly, or by promoting war. In the keenness of their private interests all these famished people forget the interests of the state. The remedy will be found in giving the women control, for they are by nature endowed with talent for administration and economy, and while the men of Athens are content only when they can introduce changes each day, Athenian women, on the contrary, remain thoroughly attached to custom and tradition. Moreover, their sentiments and their instincts constitute the best guarantee of what they will do: "The women will not let their soldier-sons perish. Who could supply them with rations so well as those who bore them? To raise money, again, is women's business, and when once they are in power, never fear that anybody will cheat them: they themselves are too well used to cheating. Many other reasons I omit. But believe me, and you shall live in perfect happiness henceforth."[2]

We now see why Aristophanes expressed himself at length in this first part. It seemed to him to be the appropriate place for such political satire as he wished to put into his play. But the very disposition he makes of this satire, in relegating it to a sort of prologue and in entrusting it to women, clearly shows that, from this time forward, it did not count for much in his opinion. He made use of a privilege that was his by tradition, and he gave vent to his displeasure by satirizing the things that were going on about him, but he no longer thought of vigorously attacking some particular statesman or some particular abuse. Content with momentarily being the spokesman of the best citizens in an airy and trenchant way, he doubtless knew only too

[1] *Ecclesiazusae*, ll. 193-200. [2] *Ibid.* ll. 232-240.

well how impotent comedy was to struggle against the stress of events.

II

This introduction serves another useful purpose. It indicates the true character of Praxagora's programme of reform. The special merit of this chimerical reform consists in the fact that it affords a strong and complete contrast to the actual life of the day. In this anxious city, among these embittered and distrustful men, who fight hard for their daily bread, behold, the poet conjures up a dream of communism which is to do away with all competition, of an ample, easy, and careless life, of an Utopia of universal good-will!

Athens was always fond of these golden dreams, so harmless and soothing. Again and again, during the misery of the Peloponnesian war, her poets had held up to her vision lands flowing with milk and honey.[1] Was it not the proper function of these servants of Dionysus to carry away the imagination in their train, far from suffering and misery, or even to pour a drop of joy into the bitter cup of life? Aristophanes had very often fulfilled this function in his youth; he continued to fulfil it as he grew older. For, after all, as life did not grow better, it was surely needful that poetry should go on with its beneficent work of amusing people. He, too, represents it in this way. Let us recall the words spoken by the chorus, when Praxagora is about to make her argument. "Now is the time to stir your sagacious mind, to rouse the power of philosophic thought, and help your women-comrades. This new plan that you defend makes for our happiness and will adorn the people of this state with countless blessings in their lives. Time it is to show us what you can do, for surely it is some clever device our state demands. But you must invent something never done nor proposed here-

[1] See Poehlmann, *Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus und Sozialismus*, ii. p. 11 *et seq.*, and Auguste Couat, *Aristophane et l'ancienne comédie attique*, pp. 198-200.

tofore, for our people hate the old, stale things they have often seen."[1]

Is it possible to say in a more agreeable and at the same time clearer manner that one is about to take flight for the land of fancy with the sole purpose of securing a few happy moments for the good people? Are we to believe that these fancies are meant to be satires at the same time, and that the roguish poet, while entertaining his audience, has in mind to make fun of this or that contemporary philosopher? Are we in particular to admit that he is about to have a good time at the expense of Plato? The question is worth a moment's study.[2] Not only had Plato not yet published his *Republic* in 392, but the Academy did not exist. At best, therefore, Aristophanes could only have attacked theories which were in process of formulation, outlined in private conversation, and then repeated and spread abroad, unless indeed, Plato later on appropriated ideas originated by others and expressed either in public addresses or in writings that are now lost.[3]

Evidently this is a possible hypothesis, whose correctness we no longer have the means of precisely determining; all that can be said of it is that Praxagora's speeches do not seem to confirm it.

In the first place, the ideas she expresses are represented by the poet himself as being absolutely new.[4] There is not the slightest allusion to a philosopher whom he might have intended to ridicule—very surprising discretion on the part of a man who did not shrink from using proper names. And then these ideas themselves have not a shade of philosophy in them. When Plato, in his *Republic*, proposes to establish

[1] *Ecclesiazusae*, ll. 571-581.

[2] On this subject see Zeller, *Phil. der Greichen*, ii. 3, p. 466, note 1. I have not had a chance to consult the more recent essay of Dietzel, *Zeitschrift für Litteratur und Geschichte der Staatswissenschaft*, i. 382, whose conclusions are of the same negative character.

[3] Aristotle, *Politics*, ii. 5 and 6, mentions two Utopians, Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamus of Miletus, who had both outlined schemes for communistic cities. This proves that these ideas were discussed among the cultured classes of the time at least, if not among the common people.

[4] *Ecclesiazusae*, ll. 578-580 and 583-585.

communism among the citizens of the upper classes, the reason he gives is the necessity of destroying individualism for the benefit of social unity. Here we have the earmarks of the thinker. Praxagora is not troubled by any such lofty considerations. She merely wishes to secure material comfort for everybody. If she desires to create community of land and money and of property in general, it is in order to establish a commonalty that is to be administered by the women and in which everybody shall live on equal terms.[1] Her ideas hardly go beyond food and drink—a conception as simple as it is material. The poet evidently is addressing an audience in which there are many poor people, and he ironically flatters their secret desires with the mad dream of a state of things in which the stress of poverty would no longer be felt.

That it is a dream appears also from the very indifference he displays to the practical and insurmountable difficulties which necessarily arise. Who is to feed this horde that is to depend on public support? Who is to see to the renewal of supplies? The slaves (l. 651). So there will have to be slaves in order that this republic may live! We may let the curious moral contradiction involved in this notion pass: it may have escaped the Greeks. But we ought, at least, to be told how these slaves are to be obtained when commerce has been done away with, and who is to make them work when nobody will care to toil. This question is not even discussed. In Praxagora's opinion, industry seems to reduce itself to the making of clothes. Who is to have charge of this? She declares that it is the women (l. 654). Thus the entire social fabric practically rests upon the goodwill of the slaves and the supposed self-denial of the women. The latter are to continue to toil as in the past, they are of course to have complete control and surveillance of the servants, and in addition to all this they are to administer the public funds. They are to do all this of their own free will and in perfection. This is the basis of the system. We need only glance at it, in order to see how far Aristophanes was from wishing to

[1] *Ecclesiazusae*, ll. 597-600.

outline a consistent and thoroughly matured theory. The programme that he imputes to Praxagora is one of those amusing paradoxes which were regarded as part of the stock-in-trade of ancient comedy. The only thing that is real in it is its resemblance to certain vague desires which arose in the imaginations of the poor, then as always, when life seemed especially hard to them. The poet takes pleasure in giving them a certain consistency, he pretends to take them seriously, he makes them real with the full license of an imagination that laughs at all probability. In order better to play his game, he gives this paradox the semblance of an argument, and he endows her who offers it with all the resources of mind and language that he possesses. The Athenians, no doubt, laughed at it. We must see to it that we are not more naïf than they were.

The second part of the programme is equally devoid of philosophy. Though Plato's theory of the community of women seems strange and profoundly anti-social to us, it is at least based upon a logical conception. Convinced that, in order to belong entirely to the state, the citizens ought to have neither affection nor selfish interests, the philosopher did away with the family with a view to strengthening society. For Praxagora this doing away with the family is merely an incidental consequence of the community of goods. There being no money, nothing would remain for mankind but disinterested love. Blepyrus appears to fear that that might not be enough.[1] In order to reassure him, Praxagora reveals the second part of her programme, the community of women. Here, again, it is merely a matter of gratifying desire. She curbs it, in truth, rather more than she gratifies it. We know how severe are her regulations. But observe that these regulations are entirely foreign to Plato.[2] For Aristophanes,

[1] *Ecclesiazusae*, l. 611 *et seq.*

[2] The only really striking coincidence is that of ll. 635-637 with the *Republic*, v. p. 461: "How," asks Blepyrus, "shall each of us recognize his own children in a life of that kind?" "Why not?" replies Praxagora, "the children will regard all the older men, as measured by time, as their fathers." Plato also says this, but this fact does not imply a common source; it is clear that the theory calls for the objection and that the objection calls for the reply.

on the contrary, they are the chief thing. The sole reason that can be given for this is that they are eminently productive of comical effects, so long at least as comedy obeys no laws of propriety. This entire part of the plot is characterized by merry and gross buffoonery, and therein lies its sole *raison d'être.* We should not search for satire in these airy jokes. They never had any other purpose than to provoke the laughter of an audience whom no indecency could shock.

III

If this twofold programme of Praxagora's is merely fanciful, the series of scenes with which the play ends should not be regarded as a refutation, properly speaking. They are likewise fanciful conceits, whose main object is to provoke laughter. Whatever refutation they contain arises less from design on the part of the poet than from the inborn fairness of his mind. When thus regarded these scenes also appear to have greater justification. As a refutation they would be strangely incomplete. As comical scenes they fully respond to the intentions of their author.

In our opinion, the best of these scenes undeniably is that of the two citizens who are asked to bring their possessions to the common fund. There is nothing more amusing, nor truer to life, than the contrast between their characters. The one, entirely ingenuous, is convinced that there is actually to be a division of goods, and thinks he cannot be in too much of a hurry to collect his bits of property, his few articles of furniture, his scanty clothes, lest he get to the appointed place too late. The other knows what decrees amount to, especially when they undertake to exact any sacrifice whatever, and so he does not believe in the division of goods. He thinks also that if it is to take place, there is nothing to be gained by getting there ahead of the others; he has fully made up his mind to be the last to arrive. But when the herald invites the citizens to dinner, nobody is in a greater hurry than he.

These scenes very vividly expose the chief impracticability of communism—the resistance offered by selfish interest. They also very neatly suggest the thought that in every imaginable form of society, indeed as long as men exist, there will be dupes. And yet, if this thought were meant to serve as a refutation, it would manifestly be too briefly expressed and not sufficiently carried to its logical consequence. It leaves us in suspense and settles nothing. Under such circumstances, the poet ought to have transported us to the public square, into the very midst of the division of goods. And there he ought to have shown us the conflict of interests, arising from the very measure which was meant to reconcile them. But what need had he of a refutation, since he had not put forward any serious theory? Praxagora's mad paradox, as it unfolded itself, was its own refutation, or rather, it was offered as a witty conceit and nothing more. Furthermore, this delightful scene is itself a fanciful conceit, a simple source of amusement, but so much the better a conceit because it contains fine psychological truths.

The last scenes do not please our modern taste as well: in them we see the women quarrelling about the love of a young man. The grossness, or even repulsiveness of these scenes, forbid our fully enjoying either the cleverness which abounds in them or the truthfulness with which the poet lets nature speak in them. But what we observe here is that they do not constitute a refutation of the theory of free love, for what the poet shows us is just the opposite of freedom. Suppress Praxagora's amusing, but absurd regulations, and the whole conception falls to pieces. It was, therefore, with a view to this funny conception that the poet worked out her regulations, which were by no means a necessary part of Praxagora's constitution. This very fact demonstrates that, in working them out, he merely intended to give full rein to his rollicking spirit, and to gratify his listeners' taste for the most licentious jokes.

From all this we gain a very clear idea of the true character of the play, considered as a whole. At the outset, a political satire, but a discursive and capricious satire devoid of

a well-arranged plan, it subsequently rushes headlong into a series of mad conceits, which it delights in prolonging for the entertainment of the audience. It seeks neither to construct theories nor to overthrow them; abandoning itself to the caprices of poetic imagination, it freely makes paradoxes, which it lustily supports with ingenious and amusing bits of sophistry, and upon which it founds an imaginary society. Finally, it chooses some of the most laughable from among the consequences of this revolution, in order to make of them a series of uproarious scenes, in the usual manner of comedy. In a word, it is a fairly incoherent poetical structure, which we must beware of taking for the work of a philosopher in disguise.

IV

The study we have made of the *Ecclesiazusae* applies in large part to the *Plutus*, which was performed four years later in 388.[1] This will make it possible for us to deal with it more briefly.

The two plays, indeed, resemble one another in their conception and in the purpose which suggested it. The latter play is no more an argument than the former, but, like the former, it is much more a sort of poetical dream, characterized by an amusing fancy which affords an agreeable contrast to real life, and which furnishes opportunity for many a satire on its details.

The impoverished state of that class of small landowners to whom, as we have seen, the poet was so much attached from the very beginning of his career appears to have suggested the idea of the play to him. The Peloponnesian war,

[1] Didascalia to argument No. iv. In connection with l. 173 one of the scholiasts mentions an earlier *Plutus*, performed twenty years before, that is in 409-408; and the scholiast of the *Frogs*, l. 1093, quotes three lines of this earlier *Plutus*. Furthermore, eight insignificant fragments are regarded as belonging to it; they are quoted in Bekker's *Anecdota* and in *Pollux* as coming from the *Plutus*, and they are not found in the extant play. *Comic. graec. fragm.* Kock, i. pp. 505-507. We know nothing more of this comedy, which was perhaps very different from the play that we know by the same name.

especially in its last years, had left complete ruin behind it. It had been necessary, little by little, by painful effort and dint of privation and labor, to accumulate working capital and farming material again. The fifteen or sixteen years which had passed since that time had been years of hard work and suffering. Moreover, the war had begun again in 395, and, although Attica was not invaded this time, the burdens resulting from the war were terribly hard. They crushed those poverty-stricken people, the product of whose labor found, at best, but a poor market. Athens was deriving her means of subsistence more and more from foreign countries. Manufacture and commerce were decidedly outstripping agriculture. Wealth was passing into the hands of manufacturers, bankers, and shipowners. It was found also in the hands of merchants and intriguers, of paid scribes, of unscrupulous politicians who exacted an ever renewed tithe from all fortunes. This was perhaps the feature which seemed most unendurable to countrymen, who were always toiling and who were always uncertain what the morrow might bring forth. They could not but be irritated when they compared their honest and fruitless toil with the clever dodges, the equivocal and lucrative rascality of those bold men, who were not held in high regard, but were feared or could not be dispensed with. This is the feeling from which sprang the comedy that we are now examining.

Chremylus is the exact type of these Athenian farmers who lead a hard life. He sees that old age is coming on apace, and he goes forth to consult the oracle of Apollo, in order to learn what he must do with his son. Ought he to condemn him to the honest and wretched existence which he himself has led? Or ought he to determine to make a rascal of him like so many others, in order that he may, at least, become rich? The god refuses an answer, but commands him to follow the first person he meets, and to take him home with him. Thus the first scene opens. Chremylus and his slave doggedly follow a mysterious person, who refuses to tell his name and who is blind to boot. Finally, overwhelmed with questions and even threatened, he admits that he is Plutus,

the god of wealth. Zeus had deprived him of his eyesight, because he instinctively went straight toward just and upright men, of whom that god is jealous. Were he to regain his eyesight, he would do as he had done before. Thereupon Chremylus promises to restore his sight if he will agree to stay with him. Plutus is afraid—afraid of Zeus, afraid of everybody. But Chremylus and Carion reassure him; they have as allies all the people of their deme, honest and poor, like Chremylus himself. We see them come in reply to Carion's summons; they form the chorus, and are quite like the leading character. After them there comes a neighbor, Blepsidemus, attracted by the public uproar. At first he is suspicious, but as soon as he is better informed, he is quite willing to take part in the enterprise, as well as in its profits. Together they proceed to escort Plutus to the temple of Aesculapius, in order that the god may restore his eyesight.

All of a sudden there appears an unexpected person, Penia (Poverty), furious and terrifying. Do they intend to banish her? She screams, she threatens; and then she attempts to prove that she is not what people think. It is she, in fact, who benefits mankind, while riches harm them. But her arguing is in vain; neither Chremylus nor Blepsidemus allows himself to be convinced by it, and Poverty finally withdraws, declaring that it will not be long before they call her back. If we omit from her speech all that is preposterously paradoxical or mere matter for laughter, her argument amounts merely to this—that deprivation frequently is a spur to energy, whereas wealth may become a source of effeminacy.

However that may be, Poverty is expelled, at least from the homes of decent people. Carion tells us that Plutus has been cured of his blindness, and we see him coming to stop with Chremylus, ready to heap benefits on him and on his neighbors. The honest farming folk are suddenly made rich. Were the play an argument in favor of slender fortunes, the author ought to have shown us in this passage what is lost by becoming rich. On the contrary he appears to welcome this outcome with satisfaction, and merely seeks to entertain us

with the spectacle of some unexpected transformations that take place in the social fabric.

A varied array of personages passes before our view. First, a just man who has grown wealthy and comes to thank the god, and explains to Chremylus how he had been ruined by obliging ungrateful people. Then, a sycophant whose business no longer thrives, and who gives vent to his rage in imprecations. The cause of his misfortune is not quite clear; we may assume that, after respectable people have grown rich, they have no further use for lawsuits. But there would still remain disreputable people who had grown poor, and he ought to be satisfied with them. Has not the poet somewhat lost his bearings? We might be led to think so, for the scene with the sycophant is not easy to understand, unless all the Athenians, without discrimination, have grown rich. At all events, this rascal is scoffed at by Chremylus, thrashed by Carion, and finally runs away, exclaiming that Plutus means to overthrow the democracy.

After the sycophant there comes a very aged woman. She is rich, and has been loved by a poor young man, but, as he is now favored by Plutus, he has suddenly changed his mind. It is very nearly the same situation as that which we have already seen in the *Ecclesiazusae*, except that we ask ourselves why Plutus has enriched the young man, and whether it is on account of his good qualities. At best, the situation remains obscure and uncertain. The fourth to come is Hermes, hungry and begging. As honest people have nothing left to wish for, they no longer offer sacrifices; Olympus is suffering from famine. Hermes makes threats in the name of Zeus; when he sees that his threats no longer frighten anybody, he changes his tone and turns suppliant. But what service can he render? He piteously enumerates all his titles. Finally, he fortunately remembers that he is the god of games and competitions, and now that honest people have grown rich they cannot indulge in too many festivals, and he will help them to celebrate them. Carion accepts his help, and, to initiate him, sends him to wash entrails at the fountain. The last to come is the priest of Zeus Soter, who is also in great

danger of dying of hunger. But how is this? Is not Plutus the real Zeus Soter now? So the priest shall be his servant. Promptly the whole company leaves in procession, to conduct Plutus solemnly to the Acropolis, into the opisthodomus of Athena's temple, where he had ceased to dwell long ago.

This short summary shows clearly how far the play is from being a serious argument, and from containing or declaring a social doctrine.

If we seek to discover the poet's intentions, without indulging in venturesome hypotheses, the following are doubtless the least controvertible. In substance, Aristophanes protests at first in the words of Chremylus, and then in those of Plutus himself, against the unfair distribution of wealth which he saw prevailing about him. He is irritated at the fact that it falls by preference into the hands of sycophants, professional orators, and intriguers; he deplores the hard lot of that rural population which had formerly been the mainstay of Attica, and which appeared to him to be the true guardian of the people's safety. But he no longer feels himself capable of making any suggestions for the cure of this evil. All that he can offer his fellow-citizens is a dream, such as he had offered them four years before—an avenging dream, as it were, which gives respectable people the imaginary satisfaction, while the play lasts, of beholding rascals derided and intriguers reduced to declaring that they are famished.

Such is the chief purpose. As for Poverty's argument, which has misled very many commentators on Aristophanes, we have already pointed out what should be thought of it. As a whole, it is purely and simply an amusing paradox, in which the poet enjoys displaying the resources of an ingenious mind—a paradox which was perhaps borrowed from some *Praise of Poverty*, written by some sophist of that day, and which conformed to the traditions of ancient comedy. It is true that in nearly all the extant plays the traditional paradox contains a bit of truth, or, what amounts to the same thing, some of the ideas that the poet considers true. This applies exactly to the present case. Aristophanes' "Poverty" defines itself: it is not destitution, but rather enforced economy

(ll. 550-555). When this distinction is once made, it is easy for the poet to show how strong a stimulant men find in the necessity of gaining a livelihood, and how all activity would come to an end if they were no longer obliged to provide for their wants. But, to tell the truth, notwithstanding all the cleverness he displays, this is at best nothing more than a commonplace school demonstration, without practical value. For it is only too clear that the conception of such universal well-being, and of such complete gratification of all desires, is absolutely beyond the reach of human possibility. At best, it may be thought that Aristophanes desired, by means of some of these observations, to make his hard-working and poverty-striken fellow-citizens more content with their hard lot, by making them appreciate that it was unavoidable as well as that it had its place in the social fabric. If he did have this thought, he himself must have felt that all his arguments would have little effect, and that, in such matters, instinct would always stand its ground against reflection. Indeed, the prettiest phase of the scene is precisely the very human prejudice of the two rustics, which is summed up in the famous statement of Chremylus to his opponent: "Nay, nay, thou shalt not convince me, even though thou do convince me."

οὐ γὰρ πείσεις, οὐδ' ἂν πεισῇς.

All this proves that the social lesson of the *Plutus* amounts to very little. As a political satire, the play is of little more importance. One might pick out a series of epigrams or jeers directed against various more or less obscure persons, such as the demagogues Pamphilus and Agyrrhius, or against the man whom he calls the "needle-seller" and whose name we do not even know, or even a whole scene referred to above, in which he gives vent to his animosity against the sycophants. But there is really nothing which would indicate a political purpose that is worthy of further remark.

V

These last two plays of Aristophanes are, therefore, very far from manifesting either a renewal of his art or a new aspect of his political attitude. What they do let us surmise, however, is much more a sort of tacit acceptance of a state of affairs which he did not relish, but which, from this time forward, it appeared to him impossible to change.

As far as he is concerned, politics, properly so-called, reduces itself to epigrams in this last period of his life. His words retain their candor, he levels keen shafts against those who displease him, with the same freedom as ever—and those who displease him are above all, now as formerly, the people's favorites, the usual advisers of the democracy—but he is content with attaching some insulting allusion to their name, or with casting an unexpected gibe at them at a convenient turn of the dialogue. He no longer dreams of writing a play against any one of them, nor against the causes or the results of their influence.

On the other hand, it would not be correct to say that he attacked the social theories which were being formulated round about him. We have not found it possible to regard either the *Ecclesiazusae* or the *Plutus* as direct or indirect refutations of doctrines, which may have taken form at the time, in the schools or in a part of Athenian society. Both these plays are fanciful inventions, which are, moreover, arranged to fit the situation of Athens at the time, and are replete with the every-day views of the people. These views are pretty nearly those which he appears to have entertained during his whole life. They are full of instinctive sympathy with the honest rustic folk, who preferred a life of toil to debates in the assembly or to the lucrative and injurious idleness of the courts. Aristophanes appears to have loved these people, the guardians of pure Athenian tradition, very sincerely, to the very end of his life, and through various trials and revolutions. Only, that in his youth he loved them not merely for their good qualities but also for

their happy disposition, for their light-heartedness, their fondness for holidays and pleasure, their artless malice, and that he hated those who appeared to him to be trying to change their good nature. Later on, when he saw them ruined, humiliated, and embittered, there was less joy in his love. In the *Lysistrata* and in the *Frogs* his chief object is to allay the hatred which he feels is growing more intense, and beneath all his merry conceits we seem to see this task cast a shadow of sadness over him. The *Ecclesiazusae* and the *Plutus* reveal still another phase of the same feeling—a secret desire to escape from a painful reality, or, in default of any quite definite hope, to impart to it, as far as he may, something at least of the nature of a dream, with the privilege of laughing at it the next moment.

It was Aristophanes' misfortune that events went against his natural tendencies. Had Athens grown mighty and prosperous at the same rate at which his genius unfolded, it is likely that his art would have risen to heights which it was kept from attaining. The type of comedy which he had realized in his *Knights* and his *Frogs* lent itself to further development. Let us suppose for a moment that Pericles had lived long enough to assure his country of victory and to select his successor. Would not political comedy have played a brilliant part in this great city, after it had become the most prominent in Greece and had been obliged to adapt its institutions to the new part it was destined to play?

Aristophanes, who was by no means hostile to the democracy, but who was so keenly alive to its inherent dangers, and saw its shortcomings so clearly, would have been able to employ his genius to warn it and, to a certain degree, to set it right. His natural bent would, no doubt, have been to point out, with his clear perception and his frank fearlessness, the elements of anarchy which manifested themselves therein, and which destroyed its effectiveness. Directly or indirectly, he would have recommended what might be called "ideas of government." And perhaps in this controversy he would not have been able to free himself entirely from certain prejudices against city life and its necessary outgrowths. Very

few men, as they grow old, are able to rid themselves of the deep-seated prejudices of their youth. But there was so much fairness in his views, regarded as a whole, that even such part of them as were mistaken did not constitute too large a factor of error. On the whole, we must regret that the natural evolution of political comedy should thus have been prematurely checked in the hands of the greatest poet that ever produced it.

Apart from this regret, what shall we set down as our final idea of the part Aristophanes played in politics?

The essential point is not to regard him as a party-man. The substance of his political attitude was rather a sentiment, in part instinctive, than a conviction. The chief basis of this sentiment was a conception of Athenian character and of Athenian society which might have been formulated somewhat as follows: kindliness in manners, joy in freedom from restraint, ease of approach, attachment to ancient customs, respect for the farmer's work, preservation of the family spirit, keen and lively affection for the fields, for the rural deme, where life was easier and more wholesome; and, with all this, great interest in social gatherings, in celebrations, in art itself, as the spontaneous expression of either a happy or a lofty ideal; and, on the other hand, pronounced aversion to sterile ambition, to unfeeling and malicious selfishness, as well as to purely intellectual curiosity, whether legitimate or otherwise.

This conception gave Aristophanes' patriotism its special, and sometimes aggressive, character. He loved Athens intensely; he hated those whom he accused of corrupting and ruining her, as though they were his personal enemies. Convinced that they were spreading and fostering hatred among her citizens within her walls, it was really harmony, good-will, and mutual confidence whose cause he defended against their attacks with bitter vehemence, and, it must be admitted, without scruples or fairness. The more this harmony was jeopardized in his eyes, the more resolutely did he come to its rescue. The *Lysistrata* and the *Frogs* bear testimony to the great hold this task had taken upon him in the latter part of his life. In foreign affairs, he was no less keenly desirous

of peace among the Greeks. We have no means of determining by what sacrifices he would have been willing to attain it, especially as he himself may possibly never have been quite clear about it. His rather vague ideal seems to have been that of a fair settlement between Athens and her allies and of an agreement with Sparta, based on mutual good-will. As he was not a statesman, he did not attempt to state exact terms, but in his heart he had a very intense Hellenic sentiment, that made him alive to the fatal nature of those fratricidal wars which paved the way for the ruin of Greece. The mad internecine struggle, under the very eyes of the enemy who rejoiced at it, appeared to him as the worst of all evils, and it was in their quality as advocates of the war that Cleon and the other demagogues inspired him with especial horror.

These sentiments, be it well understood, were not peculiar to Aristophanes. We meet them variously blended and in varying degrees in many men of that time, and, of course, they were the food and substance of party politics. As a consequence, when Aristophanes gave expression to these sentiments in his comedies, he necessarily joined hands with those who shared them and those who made use of them. Thence arose certain passing affiliations which might mislead us, were we not on our guard. *A priori* it must appear improbable that so spontaneous, so vigorous, and so original a genius should, so to speak, have lived on the suggestions of others. Such an hypothesis could only be admitted if supported by decisive proofs. But not only do we lack such proofs, but the facts, when closely examined, afford us evidence of quite the contrary. In each of the great poet's plays we have found, together with a personal conception of facts, a freely chosen purpose, which seems to have sprung directly from current events and from his own decided opinions. And therefore he alone must be held responsible for his unfairness and for his prejudices, and get credit for certain views as truly large and generous as they are far-sighted.

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