
### 3. The democratic support of athletics

Before the last decade of the classical period the Athenian dēmos was content for Ἑ γυμναστικὴ to be an upper-class preserve and hence took no public measures to facilitate the participation of lower-class citizens in athletic education or competition. Significantly, however, they were neither disinterested in athletics nor disdainful of those who were able to train and compete as athletes. On the contrary, the Athenian democracy introduced and maintained many athletic ἀγῶνες, costing the public purse and private citizens considerable amounts of cash and lost earnings each year. Lower-class citizens viewed fellow citizens who were victorious at one of the Panhellenic games as civic benefactors of the first order and hence rewarded them with some of their highest civic honours. They also kept a watching brief on the city’s sporting facilities, voted for public funds to be spent on their building and expansion and strongly discouraged the comic poets from ridiculing athletes as they did the other conspicuous members of the polis. The manifestly high estimation which the Athenian dēmos had of athletes and athletics impacted in other ways on comedy, tragedy and satyrical drama. Although the poets of each type of drama used athletics in distinct ways to meet genre-specific purposes, their common starting point was that athletics was an overwhelmingly good thing, which was closely aligned to important personal virtues and justice. In addition, the treatment of athletics in popular literature differed in one critical respect from that of other upper-class preserves, such as the drinking party, political leadership, pederastic homosexuality and horsemanship. While a few of these other activities were also publicly supported by classical Athenians, each faced a mixed and often highly critical assessment in their popular culture. The lack of comparable direct criticism of athletics in public discourse especially marks out it as an anomaly of the classical Athenian democracy.

#### 3.1. Honours for Panhellenic sporting victors

One of the highest honours which a Greek city could give a citizen was sitēsis or free dining in the Prytaneion.¹ Classical Athenians made a life-long grant of this maintenance in what was their premier public building and the symbolic heart of their city to those fellow citizens who had gained an athletic or equestrian victory at one of the four recognised Panhellenic games, which were staged every two or four years, on the Isthmus and at Nemea, Delphi and, of course, Olympia.² The earliest evidence of sitēsis for Panhellenic victory at Athens is the so-called Prytaneion Decree (*IG* I³ 131), dated on epigraphical grounds to the 430s. Fresh debate on this decidedly lacunose inscription took place throughout the 1970s, out of which came a new,

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widely agreed reading of the lines which concerned Panhellenic victors.\(^3\) Lines 11 to 18 are now restored as follows:

> And all who have won at Olympia, at the Pythia, on the Isthmus or at Nemea or shall win in the future shall have sitēsis in the Prytaneion and the other gifts in addition to sitēsis according to what is written on the stele in the Prytaneion. And all who have won with a horse-drawn chariot or racing horse at Olympia, at the Pythia, on the Isthmus or at Nemea or shall win in the future shall have sitēsis according to what is written on the stele...

The last three lines of the inscription are too fragmentary to support a restoration. Wesley Thompson suggests that the decree went on to detail the public maintenance of their horses ‘about the office of the generals’ (19) as an extra honour for equestrian victors, which is a suggestion which explains the decree’s otherwise anomalous repetition of the honours that they are to receive.\(^4\) The ‘other gifts’ of line 14 undoubtedly included proedria or front-row seating at the city’s dramatic, musical and sporting contests, which always accompanied Athenian grants of sitēsis until the Roman period (e.g. Aeschin. 2.80; Isae. 5.47).\(^5\) Giving such honours to victorious sportsmen clearly predates the inscription itself, as the decree simply confirms grants of sitēsis which are described as traditional (IG I\(^3\) 131.5) or already spelt out in an earlier inscription (14-15, 18).

Other Greek cities are known to have staged an eiselasis or welcoming home ceremony for citizens who had been victorious at Panhellenic games. In this ceremony a victor was showered with crowns, palm-fronds, ribbons, clothes and other personal gifts and conveyed in a chariot back into the city as part of a grand procession (e.g. Diod. Sic. 13.82.7-8), which regularly culminated at the sanctuary of a local city-protecting deity or hero (e.g. Pind. Nem. 5.50-4; 8.13-16; Ol. 9.110-12).\(^6\) Although we lack contemporary evidence putting the issue beyond doubt, the classical Athenians probably staged a comparable civic ceremony for their own Panhellenic victors; for Aristophanes, Euripides and Thucydides assumed that their audiences knew of ceremonial gift giving to home-coming athletic victors.\(^7\) Likewise, a Roman-period source focuses on the eiselasis of the Athenian Dioxippus after his pankration victory at the Olympics of 336 (Ael. VH 12.58).\(^8\) Such a lavish ceremony helps to explain why Olympic victors were imagined to have the happiest of lives (e.g. Pl. Resp. 465d, 620c).

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\(^6\) Currie 2005: 139-42; Kurke 1993: 137-40; S. G. Miller 2003: 30. Neumann-Hartmann 2009 shows how there is no firm evidence that Panhellenic victors ever dedicated their victory-crowns in a sanctuary either at the site of their victory or back home.

\(^7\) Ar. Eq. 498-502; Eur. El. 880-5; Thuc. 4.121.1-2; cf. Plut. Per. 28.4.

This treatment of Panhellenic victors is noteworthy and requires careful explanation. The Athenian democracy gave *sitēsis* and *proedria* to, among others, victorious generals (e.g. Aeschin. 2.8; Ar. *Ach.* 281, 573-6, 702-4; Dem. 23.1-7), select descendants of Harmodius and Aristogiton (e.g. Din. 1.101; Isae. 5.47; *IG* I 131.5-7), who were believed to have liberated the city from the Pisistratid tyranny (e.g. Thuc. 1.20), and politicians who had been judged to have outperformed others in their service to the city.9 Clearly these recipients were civic benefactors of the highest order. The fact that Panhellenic victors were given the same ‘very big gifts’ and ‘honours’ tends to suggest that the Athenian dēmos judged them to have performed an unsurpassable public service.10 This is confirmed by the way in which public speakers canvassed their own sporting victories or those of their forebears (e.g. Thuc. 6.16).

Among the tactics which Athenian litigants employed to win over the predominantly lower-class jurors was the cataloguing of public services. The *agatha* or good deeds which were regularly listed were festival and military liturgies, the payment of the *eisphora* or emergency property tax for war, exemplary military service and acts of charity in aid of poor Athenians. If litigants could do so, however, they also mentioned Panhellenic victories. In defence of the late Alcibiades’ character, for example, his son mentions not only his father’s extraordinary track record as a liturgist (Isoc. 16.35), his winning of the first prize for courage at Potidæa and of victories as a general (29-30) and his efforts to restore the democracy (36-7) but also his chariot-racing victory at the Olympics of 416 (31-5). For Demotheenes too this Panhellenic success, along with his military victories, were among the *euergesiai* or good works which Alcibiades had performed for Athens (21.143-5; cf. Lycurg. 1.51). In another speech in which a son has to defend his dead father, liturgies and monetary aid for poor Athenians are mentioned alongside equestrian victories at the Isthmian and Nemean Games (Lys. 19.58-64). One of Demotheenes’ clients, finally, desperately sought to create *kharis* or a sense of gratitude in the jurors by canvassing how his grandfather had won the *stadion* for boys at the Olympic Games, while his grandfather’s uncle had helped to restore the democracy in 411 (58.66-7). Clearly lower-class Athenians thought that the winners of Panhellenic games were worthy of the same recognition as those citizens who had performed an extraordinary feat on the battlefield or in defence of the democracy.

One of the few scholars who have attempted to explain this extraordinary evaluation of Panhellenic success is Leslie Kurke. She considers it to be part of what she calls ‘the economy of *kudos*’ in which the *kudos* of a Panhellenic victor was shared harmoniously with his city. For Kurke *kudos* was a magico-religious power, which individuals acquired by sporting or military victory and could employ in the future to aid the military campaigns or colonial ventures of their *poleis*.11 The songs,

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9 For this honouring of politicians for exemplary service, see, for example, Aeschin. 3.178; Ar. *Eq.* 281-4, 647, 709, 766, 1404; Dem. 20.107-8; Din. 1.102; cf. Isoc. 15.95.
10 So described by Dem. 20.141 and Isoc. 16.50; cf. 4.1.
she suggests, which were commissioned to praise the victory of a sportsman consistently associated this talismanic power with the vegetational crown which he had won and the circulation of his *kudos* among fellow citizens with the dedication of this prize in a local sanctuary (e.g. Pind. *Isthm.* 1.10-12; Ol. 4.8-12; 5.1-8).\(^\text{12}\) In support of her theory Kurke discusses historical episodes where *poleis* apparently involved Panhellenic victors in risky ventures in order to harness their magico-religious power.\(^\text{13}\) Thus it was out of a sense of gratitude for this sharing of their *kudos*, she concludes, that Greek cities staged the *eiselasis* for their Panhellenic victors and gave them other generous gifts.

Kurke deserves credit for her nuanced explanation of the usually unremarked standing of Panhellenic victors. In the last several years, however, her theory has been largely refuted.\(^\text{14}\) In epic and epinician poetry it is clear that *kudos* is not a power which individuals win and hence possess for the future; rather, it is the discretionary aid which a divinity grants a military leader or a competitor in a sporting *agôn* so that he can vanquish his opponents (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.279; 11.300).\(^\text{15}\) Certainly, receiving such aid, like victory itself, may be a mark of distinction and he who does so may even be called *kudos* (e.g. 10.87, 555; 11.511), but it is possessed only fleetingly and, as Emile Benveniste observes, ‘the god grants it now to one and now to another at his good will’.\(^\text{16}\) In their songs for sportsmen, it is clear too, Bacchylides and Pindar associated the crown and victory itself much more frequently with the profane phenomena of *doxa* (‘good opinion’) and *kleos* (‘glory’) than they did with *kudos*.\(^\text{17}\) Alternate explanations, finally, which make better sense of the surviving evidence can be made for the roles of Panhellenic victors in the historical episodes which Kurke highlights.\(^\text{18}\) The Spartans, for example, stationed them next to one of their kings in battle, because they probably judged it to be a place of honour and also believed, as Plutarch suggests (*Mor.* 639e7-10; Lyc. 22.4; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.33), that there was a close relationship between military and sporting performance.\(^\text{19}\) They also gave citizenship to Tisamenus of Elis, as he was from a famous family of military seers and the Delphic oracle had prophesised that he would win five great *agônes*, which, they came to realise, referred to battles rather than athletic contests (Hdt. 9.33-5).\(^\text{20}\) Likewise, Phayllus of Croton only had a solitary trireme, when he brought help to the Greeks before the battle of Salamis, not, as Kurke suggests, because his *kudos* was the substantive aid, but because he had financed and manned the ship on his own initiative (Hdt. 8.47; Paus. 10.9.2), which was a longstanding practice of Greek aristocrats, and it was widely believed that even

\[^{13}\] Kurke 1993: 133-7.
\[^{14}\] Especially by Kyriakou 2007.
\[^{16}\] Benveniste 1973: 348.
\[^{17}\] Kyriakou 2007: 130-9 with references.
\[^{20}\] Chapter 5.
one or two ships constituted valuable assistance in such circumstances (e.g. Hdt. 8.1, 46, 48; IG I³ 823).²¹

If ‘magico-religious considerations’ had no part to play in this remarkable honouring of sporting victors by a city, the ‘only plausible explanation’ would appear to be ‘the victory’s political potential’.²² From time to time classical Athenians did mention the benefits of a Panhellenic victory for their polis. Their comments serve as an appropriate starting point for piecing together the substance of this political value. The fullest discussion of this topic occurs in the defence speech of Alcibiades the younger, when he canvasses his father’s unprecedented entering of seven teams into the contest for four-horse chariots at the Olympic Games of 416 BC (Isoc. 16.32-4). According to his son, Alcibiades was motivated to compete as lavishly as he did out of consideration of the political advantages which it could bring his polis. Thus he saw that ‘the Greeks made a display of wealth, power and education’ at this panēguris or Panhellenic festival and that, while athlētai or athletic competitors were objects of envy, so too ‘the cities of victors’ became onomastai or renowned by name (32). In a roundabout way his son suggests that Alcibiades thought Olympic competitors to be polis-representatives; for he also believed, it is said, that liturgies at Athens might have been performed ‘in the name of private individuals’ before fellow citizens, but those at this festival were ‘in the name of the city before all of Greece (huper tēs poleōs eis hapasan tēn Hellada – 32-3; cf. Isoc. 15.301-2)’. This speaker’s claims, of course, should be carefully evaluated; for, as we have already seen, he was not beyond falsifying, for sake of his own defence, political history and his father’s motives for choosing equestrian over athletic contest.²³ But on this topic other evidence appears to corroborate what he says. For example, a sporting victor was clearly identified with his polis at the Panhellenic games.²⁴ The onoma (‘name’) of his city or his city-ethnic was given pride of place in the proclamation of his victory immediately after the agôn.²⁵ This identification was reinforced by the commemorative statues of sporting victors which were set up at Olympia: most of their inscribed epigrams identified his polis (e.g. Anth. Pal. 13.15; Paus. 6.9.9, 16.5), while a few stated that the statue had been commissioned by the winner’s own dēmos (e.g. Paus. 6.13.11).²⁶

These claims of Alcibiades the younger also correspond with what other Athenian litigants and writers for upper-class readers had to say about the advantages of Panhellenic success. Thucydides for one had Alcibiades the elder use almost identical terms to justify his Olympic participation in an assembly-speech: it brought

²² Kyriakou 2007: 149.
²³ Chapter 2.
doxa to him and his family and ὀμολογία (‘profit’) and timē to the city (6.16.1-3). In particular, he argues, his entering of so many chariot-racing teams and lavish after party for his victory gave ‘the Greeks’ an impression of the dunamis or military power of Athens which was greater than was actually the case after the costly Archidamian War (2-3). In a similar vein Isocrates conceded that Panhellenic victors created some doxa for their cities (e.g. 15.301; cf. Pl. Leg. 950e). In addition, one litigant, like Alcibiades’ son, said that his father, by his equestrian victories at Isthmia and Nemea, had brought Athens timē (Lys. 19.63), while another claimed that his grandfather ‘by winning the stadion for boys at Olympia crowned the city’ (ἑρακλοευαὶ τὴν πόλιν – Dem. 58.66; cf. [Andoc.] 4.31). This last metaphor, which also figures in the epigrams of victors’ statues (e.g. Anth. Pal. 16.2; 13.15), is ambiguous. As the victor’s crowning is public recognition of his nikē (e.g. Eur. El. 613, 886-7; Lys. 19.63), its meaning could be that the Panhellenic victor recognises his victory as his city’s or, equally, that he makes his city victorious.

The classical Athenians seem to have lacked a conceptual language for describing the representation of a city or group by an individual and hence struggled to explain succinctly the political potential of Panhellenic victory. The claims which they did make, however, along with the clear identification of competitor and polis at the games, imply that ‘the athletic success of its citizens reflected back on the polis’ and that the Panhellenic festivals ‘were not only competitions among individual athletes but also among the poleis which they represented’. Thus they provide a classic example of what social scientists call the representational function of sport. A sporting competition functions in this way when members of comparable and potentially rival groups strongly believe that they are represented in it against representatives of another group or other groups and that its outcome bears directly on their standing relative to each other.

The victory of one of its sportsmen was so politically valuable for a polis because of the publicity which a Panhellenic festival gave this success. The agōnes of these festivals were the most popular in the Greek world, attracting enormous numbers of competitors, theōroi or sacred ambassadors and ordinary spectators from right across the Mediterranean. The best attended games of the períodos or circuit was the Olympics, whose stadium of the mid-fourth century could accommodate up to forty-five thousand spectators, but the other three games still attracted crowds in the tens of thousands and of comparable diversity. As a consequence, whatever took place during these festivals or could be otherwise observed had the potential to

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30 For this lack of terms for political representation, see Keane 2009: 43-4.
32 Chapter 1.
33 For the theōroi which Athens sent to Panhellenic games, see, for example, Andoc. 1.132; [Andoc.] 4.29-30; Din. 1.81; Thuc. 6.16.2.
become known to almost the entire Greek world as official *polis*-representatives, athletes and spectators returned home and reported what they had seen. This helps to explain why classical Athenians commonly said that ‘the Greeks’ in their entirety attended or witnessed a celebration of the Olympic Games.\(^{35}\)

*Poleis* assiduously exploited this opportunity to gain nationwide publicity (Isoc. 6.95-6).\(^{36}\) They used the sanctuary, for example, to display peace treaties or, more regularly, dedications of arms, sculpture or treasuries whose inscriptions advertised their military victories over each other and probably used the Olympics as well to make public announcements to other Greeks.\(^{37}\) Thus it was not just fellow citizens but potentially all of Greece which came to know of the victory which a *polis* had gained by the success of one of its citizens at Panhellenic games. Such a victory gave cities of otherwise no importance rare international prominence and those which were regional powers uncontested proof of the \(\text{timē}\) or worth which they claimed in relation to their neighbours and rivals.\(^{38}\) That *poleis* did view Panhellenic success as significant for their international relations is apparent in their reactions if one of their citizens seemed to be deprived of his victory unjustly (e.g. Thuc. 5.49-50; Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.21-31).\(^{39}\) In 322, for example, Callipus of Athens, who had been proclaimed the winner of the Olympic pentathlon, was judged by the Eleans to have bribed his opponents and hence was fined and disqualified (Paus. 5.21.5-7; cf. Aeschin. 2.12). Athens sent one of its foremost politicians, Hyperides, as an ambassador to try to have the judgement appealed.\(^{40}\) He did not succeed and the city effectively boycotted the Olympics for the next twenty years.

Classical Athens, like other *poleis*, considered those of its citizens who had won an athletic or equestrian victory at Panhellenic games to be civic benefactors of the highest order, because they had raised the international standing of their city on their own initiative and without the financial support of the city.\(^{41}\) ‘Cities, that is, were actually conscious of the potential of their athletes for their own self-advertisement.’\(^{42}\) What also made them deserving of ‘very big gifts’ and ‘honours’ was that only a few of the city’s sportsmen ever gained a Panhellenic victory (e.g. Aeschin. 3.180; Dem. 20.141).\(^{43}\) In addition, these victors, if they had been athletes, had personally endured the *ponoi* (‘toils’) and *kindunoi* (‘dangers’) of athletic training

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\(^{35}\) E.g. [Andoc.] 4.27, 30; Ar. *Plut.* 583-4; Isoc. 16.31-2; Thuc. 5.50; 6.16.2.

\(^{36}\) For dedications of *poleis* at Delphi publicising their military victories, see Jacquemin 2001.

\(^{37}\) For peace treaties, see, for example, Paus. 5.23.4; Thuc. 5.18.10; Hunt 2010b: 208; Nielsen 2007: 78-82. For dedications as a consequence of military victory, see chapter 5. For proclamations, see, for example, Dem. 18.91; Hdt. 6.126; Plut. *Tim.* 23.1; Nielsen 2007: 62-71.


\(^{39}\) Golden 2011: 9-10.

\(^{40}\) Nielsen 2007: 85 n. 291; Weiler 1991 – all with primary sources.

\(^{41}\) Aneziri 2009: 221-2; Kyle 2007: 178.

\(^{42}\) Currie 2005: 155.

\(^{43}\) Chapter 2.
and competition and possessed the aretē and the kudos or divine aid which were required for athletic success.44

3.2. Local sporting contests and public infrastructure for athletics

The public support of sport in democratic Athens was not limited to Panhellenic victors. The Athenian dēmos founded and maintained a large number of festival-based agōnes and gave materially valuable prizes to local and foreign sportsmen who were victorious at the games which they sponsored. The democracy secured a large amount of public and private resources to run its program of festivals. Athletics was much more prominent than the other types of competition in these religious celebrations. In addition the dēmos carefully managed the city’s public infrastructure for athletic education and its privately owned palaistrai or wrestling schools.

The classical Athenians staged polis-sponsored festivals and public sacrifices regularly throughout the year and believed with some justification that they had more of them than any other Greek city.45 Festivals, of course, gave their human participants terpsis or delight and respite from, among other burdens, the ponoi of war (e.g. Pl. Leg. 653d; Thuc. 2.38.1).46 The opportunities which they gave for watching sport, feasting on meat and carousing more generally encouraged happiness (Diod. Sic. 12.26.4). They also helped to maintain, it was believed, the kharis or sense of gratitude of their objects of worship.47 Contests were one of the standard acts of a Greek heortē or festival and most of those at Athens apparently had agōnes in athletics, horsemanship, drama, music or, more often than not, in a combination of these activities.48 The other standard rituals were the sacrifice and the pompē or procession.49 Most of the competitive festivals of the Athenian polis were established by the democracy in its first fifty years.50 The scale and funding of these heortai remained stable during the Peloponnesian War and throughout the first half of the fourth century.51 In its last thirty years, however, the democracy returned to a policy of expanding its festivals. Around 350 it supported the proposal of Eubulus to introduce the so-called theōrika, which was a regular cash-payment to citizens to facilitate their participation in the city’s religious celebrations (e.g. Dem. 1.19-20;

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44 Chapter 5.
45 For the regular program of festivals, see, for example, Isae. 9.21; Isoc. 7.29; Lys. 30.19-20. For this belief, see, for example, Isoc. 4.45; Ps.-Xen. 3.2; cf. Ar. Nub. 307-10. Between 120 and 170 days of each year featured a polis-sponsored festival or sacrifice in classical Athens (Kyle 2007: 167; Ober 2008: 195-6; and especially Mikalson 1975).
48 For the details of Athenian festivals, see now Parker 2005: especially 456-87.
51 Osborne 2007b: 14-15. The number of festival liturgies, for example, and the amounts which upper-class citizens spent on them were unaffected by the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War; see, for example, Lys. 21.1-4; Christ 2006: 163; Wilson 2000: 89-93; 2008: 112.
From the later 330s, finally, the dēmos regularly accepted the proposals of Lycurgus and other politicians to establish new festivals or to add new agōnes or more sumptuous celebrations every four years to pre-existing festivals.\(^{53}\)

Athletics featured in two thirds of the fifteen competitive festivals which the democratic Athenian polis managed and did so much more often than the other types of agōnes.\(^{54}\) Clearly ‘the popularity of athletics parallels the flourishing of Athenian democracy’.\(^{55}\) Four of these heortai had a reasonably full program of athletic events and awarded prizes of some monetary value.\(^{56}\) From the early fifth century Athens administered a four yearly festival of Heracles at Marathon, which included contests in athletics and music.\(^{57}\) Here athletes competed ‘over silver cups’ (Pind. Ol. 9.90; cf. Nem. 9.51-3; Soph. fr. 378 Snell, Kannicht and Radt), each of which would have ranged in value from 100 to 200 drachmas.\(^{58}\) The games of the Eleusinia also go back to the early years of the Athenian democracy (e.g. Pind. Isthm. 1.57; Ol. 9.99; 13.110; IG I\(^3\) 988; cf. 991).\(^{59}\) The earliest evidence, however, for their frequency and scope of events is the later-fourth-century accounts of the three supervisors of Eleusis and the treasurers of the two goddesses (IG II\(^2\) 1672).\(^{60}\) After elaborating the sanctuary’s income and expenditure, they record the amount of wheat received as rent on its sacred lands and how it was spent between 332/1 and 329/8 (252-61). Seventy medimnoi of wheat were given out as prizes for two celebrations of a trietēris or two yearly version of the festival (258-9) and probably another 70 medimnoi for a four yearly version (258-60; cf. 261).\(^{61}\) Both versions – according to the accounts – had horse races and contests in athletics, music and ‘ancestral’ events (258-60). As they next mention a horse race recently ‘added by an assembly-decree’ (261), these two and four yearly celebrations most probably predate the expansion of the city’s

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\(^{52}\) Csapo 2007: 100-3; Cawkwell 1963; Rhodes 1981: 513-5. Roselli commendably makes the strongest possible case for some form of theōrika from the mid-fifth century (2009; 2011: 87-117), but the weight of the classical-period evidence for such a payment makes it more likely, as Ruschenbusch has shown (1979), that it was introduced a century later.


\(^{54}\) This calculation is based on the surviving evidence of athletic agōnes (see below) and the list of competitive festivals which Robin Osborne has conveniently compiled (1993: 38, followed by Kyle 2007: 168). \textit{Pace} Osborne it does not include the Aianteia and the Theseia; there is no evidence that their athletic contests of the hellenistic period date back to the era of the democracy (Kyle 1987: 40-1; Parker 2005: 456, 483-4). Moreover, the Rural Dionysia was celebrated in, and administered by, individual demes (e.g. IG I\(^3\) 254; II\(^2\) 1206; Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 42-5; Wilson 2007a; 2010), which means that it cannot be counted as a polis-sponsored festival.

\(^{55}\) S. G. Miller 2004a: 233.

\(^{56}\) For the scale of their competitive programs, see Pritchard 2012c: 36-8.


\(^{60}\) Humphreys 2004: 88.

festivals under Lycurgus. The prizes of wheat at the two and four yearly versions of this festival had a market value of 210 and 420 drachmas respectively.\textsuperscript{62}

Soon after the Persian Wars Athens established annual ‘contests in athletics, equestrian events and music of every sort’ as part of its heroisation of the war dead (Pl. \textit{Menex}. 249b; cf. Diod. Sic. 11.33.3).\textsuperscript{63} The victors of these games took home as prizes bronze hydrias and \textit{lebetes} (\textit{IG} I\textsuperscript{3} 523-5; cf. Soph. fr. 378 Snell, Kannicht and Radt), which were probably worth 30 or more drachmas.\textsuperscript{64} In the late 330s, finally, the Macedonians returned to Athens the territory of Oropus, which the city had repeatedly lost to Thebes over the previous century. With the help of Lycurgus and his associates the \textit{dēmos} established a \textit{polis}-administered festival for the healing god, Amphiaras, whose sanctuary was located in this territory (\textit{IG} VII.4253.10-15).\textsuperscript{65}

This new \textit{pentetēris} or four yearly festival, which was first celebrated in 329/8, had a large program of 33 athletic, equestrian and musical events and possibly also a competition in \textit{eutaxia} or military drill for the tribal corps of the ephebes which were stationed nearby.\textsuperscript{66} With more \textit{agōnes} than the other two types of events combined athletics was the mainstay of this competitive program.

All four of these local games attracted competitors from beyond Attica (cf. Eur. \textit{Alc.} 1025-36). The victory songs of Pindar, for example, which mentioned athletic victories at the Eleusinia and Heracleia were for non-Athenians (see above), while one of the surviving prizes from the games of the war dead was found in a cemetery near Thessaloniki in northern Greece.\textsuperscript{67} In the so-called Great Amphiaraiia of 329/8 slightly more than half of the victors may have been Athenian, but 16 of the 26 winners in the athletic \textit{agōnes} were foreigners and included athletes who had come from as far away as Asia Minor, the western Peloponnese and North Africa.\textsuperscript{68}

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\item[\textsuperscript{62}] The average price of a \textit{medimnos} of wheat was 6 drachmas (Pritchett 1956: 196-8 with primary sources).
\item[\textsuperscript{63}] Arist. \textit{Ath. Pol.} 58.1; Dem. 60.10; Lys. 2.80; cf. Plut. \textit{Per.} 8.6. Kyle 1987: 44-5; Parker 1996: 132; 2005: 469-70; Pritchett 1985: 106-12; Vanderpool 1969: 3-5. For the common practice of treating war dead as demigods, see Currie 2005: 89-119 with testimonia.
\item[\textsuperscript{64}] A second-hand \textit{khalkion thermantērion}, which was a similar size to a \textit{lebēs}, sold for 25 drachmas 2 obols at a public auction of the later fifth century (\textit{IG} I\textsuperscript{3} 421.96). The prize for the individual winner of the torch race at the Great Panathenaea of the 380s was a hydria of an unspecified material which was worth 30 drachmas (\textit{IG} II\textsuperscript{2} 2311.89). As this was much too much to pay for a finely painted pot (Pritchard 1999b: 7 with references), this prize hydria was presumably made of bronze.
\item[\textsuperscript{65}] Humphreys 2004: 90, 95, 111-16; Osborne 1993: 24-5; Parker 1996: 149; 2005: 457.
\item[\textsuperscript{66}] Arist. \textit{Ath. Pol.} 54.7 with Rhodes 1981: 610. An inscription from the god’s sanctuary at Oropus details the victors and events at the first celebration of this festival in 329/8 (Petrakos 1996: no. 520). For the \textit{eutaxia}, see \textit{IG} II\textsuperscript{2} 417 with Davies 1967: 39; Friend 2009: 133, 176.
\item[\textsuperscript{67}] Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 5243. For the epigraphical evidence for foreign victors at the Eleusinia, see Rigsby 2010: 291 n. 11.
\item[\textsuperscript{68}] Petrakos 1996: no. 520.
\end{itemize}
suggest, as 4 of the victories by Athenians appear to have been in athletic *agōnes* which were reserved for citizens. 69

Four other festivals which were celebrated annually also had a solitary contest for athletes. From the fifth century the festivals in honour of Hephaestus, Prometheus and Pan had a torch-relay for teams of eighteen- and nineteen-year-old citizens (Hdt. 6.105, Lys. 21.3; *IG* I 3 82.31-5). 70 These races, which traversed the heart of the city, were clearly among the sporting *agōnes* which were most closely followed by the citizen masses (e.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 312-4; Ar. *Ran.* 1087-98). The painters of Attic finely painted pots depicted no other athletic event in as much detail as they did the torch race. 71 There was probably also a foot race in which citizens of the same age had to carry vine-branches at the Oschophoria. 72

The largest and most varied program of sporting and musical contests was part of the Great Panathenaea. 73 This was the grander version of the city’s annual festival in honour of its patron deity, Athena, which was staged every four years. 74 It did not mark the goddess’s birthday, which is a misinterpretation going back to the nineteenth century, but celebrated the Gigantomachy and Athena’s prominent role in this military victory of the Olympians over the Giants (e.g. Arist. fr. 637 Rose). 75 The early-fourth-century list of prizes for the Great Panathenaea details 27 events for individual competitors (*IG* II 2 2311). 76 This festival followed the normal practice of running separate contests for different age-classes but its awarding of prizes for placegetters as well as victors set it apart from the other games. 77 For individuals, then, the festival of the 380s had 39 contests and 81 prizes. Nineteen of these *agōnes* were for athletes. In addition the Great Panathenaea had 10 contests for choruses and for tribal teams of torch racers, manly young men, sailors and horsemen (*IG* II 2 2311.83-93). 78 The competitive program of this local festival was more extensive

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69 This festival ran 4 standard athletic events for ‘boys’ twice: once ‘from everyone’ and again ‘from athletics fields’ (Petarakos 1996: no. 520.10-11, 18-21, 27, 29-34; cf. Dem. 23.40). The victors in the first set of *agōnes* included foreigners, whereas those in the second were only from Athens.

70 Davies 1967: 35-6, 40; Parker 1996: 163-8; 2005: 471-2, 477. For the age of athletes and the organisation of their training, see chapter 2.

71 Bentz 2007.


74 The so-called Small Panathenaea had choruses in the *purrhikhē* and others which danced dithyrambs (Lys. 21.1-2; Ps.-Xen. 3.4), but clearly lacked *agōnes* for individual competitors (Tracy 2007).


76 My calculations are based on the restoration of this prize list by Julia Shear (2003: especially 103-5).


78 For the likelihood of dithyrambic choruses at this festival, see Davies 1967: 37; Shear 2001: 345-8. For the Panathenaic *anthippasia*, which was a mock battle between the tribal corps of the city’s cavalry, see, for example, Xen. *Eq. mag.* 3.1, 10-14; *IG* II 2 3130; Goette 2007; Kyle 1987: 189-90; 1992: 94; Shear 2001: 340-5; 2003: 91 n.11.
than the Olympic Games, which explains why its celebration went for 10 days, lasting longer than any other Athenian festival.\textsuperscript{79}

The victors and placegetters in the athletic and equestrian agōnes of the Great Panathenaea were awarded multiple amphorae of olive oil which was sacred to Athena (e.g. Ath. Pol. 60.1-3; Pind. Nem. 10.33-7).\textsuperscript{80} The image of Athena which always appeared on one side of the amphorae evoked the festival’s aition or mythical explanation, as it showed the goddess dancing her pyrrhic dance for the first time as part of the Olympians’ celebration of their victory over the Giants.\textsuperscript{81} The winner of the men’s stadiōn was probably given 80 amphorae, which contained a staggering 73 metretai or 2.9 cubic tons of olive oil.\textsuperscript{82} The first prize in the chariot race for two full-grown horses was 140 amphorae, containing 128 metretai or 5.1 cubic tons of sacred oil (IG II\textsuperscript{2} 2311.67-8). The market value of these two prizes was 1247 and 2182 drachmas respectively.\textsuperscript{83} The prizes, by contrast, in the musical agōnes for individuals were bullion-crowns or cash-purses, which ranged from 100 to 1200 drachmas (5-22). The combined monetary value of these prizes for individuals adds up to more than 7 talents.\textsuperscript{84} The availability of prizes of such high material value and in such number helped to attract numerous foreign competitors: many of this festival’s distinctively painted prize amphorae have been found in sanctuaries around the Greek world, while several of Pindar’s victory songs for non-Athenians mention their athletic or chariot-racing victories at Athens.\textsuperscript{85} The six surviving lists of Panathenaic victors from the second century BC confirm this picture (IG II\textsuperscript{2} 2313-17).\textsuperscript{86} ‘Of the 200-odd victories listed...about half – including most boy victors – are not Athenian.’\textsuperscript{87}

The victorious athletes of this festival gained not only valuable prizes but also public acknowledgement of their nikē before the spectators and other competitors.\textsuperscript{88}

On Panathenaic prize amphorae and red-figure pots depictions of the immediate aftermath of an agōn regularly show an athlothetaiēs, who was one of the festival’s

\textsuperscript{79} For the Olympic program at the end of the fourth century, see S. G. Miller 2003; 2004a: 113-29. For the duration of the Great Panathenaea, see Kyle 2007: 157-8; Shear 2001: 382-4.
\textsuperscript{80} Johnston 2007.
\textsuperscript{81} Pinney 1988.
\textsuperscript{82} For the restoration of this prize, see Shear 2003: 95. Each Panathenaic amphora was filled with 11 chōes, that is, 1 chous short of a metretes (Bentz 1998: especially 31-40). The metretes and chous are equivalent to 39.40 and 3.28 litres respectively (34).
\textsuperscript{83} A metretes of olive oil was probably worth around 17 drachmas (Golden 1998: 165; Valavanis 1986: 455 n. 13; Young 1984: 116 n. 113).
\textsuperscript{84} Pritchard 2012c: 27.
\textsuperscript{85} Panathenaic amphorae have been found at Eretria, Sparta, Thebes and much further afield (Golden 1998: 166; Hodkinson 1999: 152-7; Themelis 2007: 25-6 with bibliography). E.g. Pind. Isthm. 2.19-21; 4.25-6; Nem. 4.18-19; Ol. 9.88; 13.38-9; cf. Anth. Pal. 13.19.1-4; IG II\textsuperscript{2} 2313.
\textsuperscript{86} Three of these lists come from an inscription which was published in the last few decades; for its editio princeps and an analysis of all six lists, see, respectively, Tracy and Habicht 1991 and Tracy 1991.
\textsuperscript{87} Golden 1998: 166.
organising magistrates, crowning an athlete with a vegetational wreath, bedecking him with ribbons or handing him a branch or palm-frond (cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 60.1).  

Panathenaic amphorae also depict an *athlothetēs*, sometimes aided by a trumpeter, proclaiming the athlete’s victory as was done at the Panhellenic games (figure 3.1). There are no depictions of this festival’s equestrian victors being recognised in the same way. This immediate acknowledgement of the athletic victor was distinct from the rewarding of the amphorae of sacred oil, which probably took place in a later ceremony. After the proclamation the victorious athlete normally took part in a *phullobolia* (literally, ‘the throwing of branches’). This saw him given personal gifts by assembled friends, relatives and spectators. On finely painted Attic pots such gifts not only replicate the official prizes of crowns, ribbons and branches but also include items of clothing and traditional love-gifts, such as a hare. Sometimes the athlete is shown placing these on an altar.

**Insert figure 3.1 here. Probably 2 thirds of a page in size.**

Figure 3.1: A runner carries the crown, ribbon and palm-frond which he has been awarded as a victor at the Great Panathenaea, while an *athlothetēs* announces with the aid of a trumpeter his victory. Panathenaic prize amphora, 340/39 BC, attributed to the Nikomachos Series. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. MNC 706.

The Athenian democracy forced its upper-class citizens to pay for a large portion of the running costs of its festival program (e.g. Xen. *Oec.* 2.6). The *lampadēphoroi* or torch racers of the Great Panathenaea, Hephaestea and Prometheia competed and trained as part of teams which had been drawn from the Cleisthenic tribes. The cost of training each of these ten teams fell to an upper-class citizen serving as a *gumnasiarkhos* or athletic-training-sponsor (e.g. Xen. *Vect.* 4.51-2). A *khorēgos* (‘chorus-sponsor’) did the same for each of the choruses which competed in the city’s dramatic and dithyrambic contests (e.g. *Ath. Pol.* 56.2-3). In addition, wealthy citizens were responsible for a handful of other liturgies to do with the city’s festivals (e.g. Dem. 21.156; Lys. 21.5). The number of these public services obviously increased as the Athenian *dēmos* authorised the expansion of the polis-administered festivals. During the 350s festival liturgies added up to 97 annually, rising to 118 in the years of the Great Panathenaea.

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89 E.g. Archaeological Museum (Herakleion) inv. no. 26,556 (Valavanis 1990: fig. 13); British Museum, inv. no. B138 (Valavanis 1990: fig. 15); Antikensammlungen (Munich) inv. no. 2420 (S. G. Miller 2004a: fig. 208; Neils 1994: fig. 7).  
93 E.g. Museum of Fine Arts (Boston) inv. no. 10.178 (Neils 1994: fig. 14).  
94 E.g. Musée du Louvre (Paris) inv. no. G296.  
95 Fisher 2011: 182.  
96 Davies 1967: 40.
The Athenian upper class was placed under considerable social pressure to undertake such liturgies. As far as the Athenian people were concerned, it was the duty of rich citizens to do so (e.g. Ar. Lys. 653-4; Dem. 42.22; Lys. 27.10). As a consequence, elite Athenians who sought to be political leaders found that they could consolidate their popularity by performing liturgies on a lavish scale.97 Others who were involved in legal agōnes or disputes sought to build up the kharis towards themselves on the part of lower-class jurors by cataloguing the liturgies and other agatha which they had performed for the city (e.g. Lys. 3.46; 12.38; 30.1).98 Some even admitted that their main reason for performing them in the first place had been to secure leniency from any prospective jury (e.g. 18.23; 20.31; 25.11-13). Failure to meet this perceived duty or even the carrying out of these public services half-heartedly left wealthy citizens open to vilification by those who opposed them in a legal or political agōn (e.g. Din. 1.25-6; Isae. 5.36; cf. Dem. 27.46). While these practices of the democracy ensured that many upper-class Athenians volunteered or were informally encouraged by polis or tribal officials to be festival liturgists or trierarchs, legal means also existed to compel individuals to take them up if further numbers were required.99

In antiquity the complaint was occasionally made that the classical Athenians actually spent more on staging polis-administered festivals than on their armed forces. In an assembly speech of 352/1 Demosthenes, who was, at the time, an inexperienced and minor politician, tried to shame the dēmos into accepting his strategically questionable proposals for more campaigns in northern Greece against Philip of Macedon.100 As part of this attempt he criticised the dēmos for spending more money on the Great Panathenaea and City Dionysia than they did on hēna tōn apostolōn or a solitary naval expedition (4.35-7). Plutarch similarly claimed in his On the Glory of Athens: ‘If the cost of the production of each drama were reckoned, the Athenian people would appear to have spent more on the production of Bacchaes and Phoenician Women and Oedipuses and the misfortunes of Medeas and Electras than they did on maintaining their empire and fighting for their liberty against the Persians.’101

Since the early nineteenth century some scholars have viewed this ancient complaint as fully justified.102 The democracy of classical Athenians undeniably did spend a large amount of money on polis-level festivals. But careful comparison of its

100 For the lack of political success of Demosthenes before the mid-340s and the strategic shortcomings of his military proposals, see Badian 2000: 26-37; Cawkwell 1962a: 135-40; 1962b: 377-8; 1963: 53.
101 Mor. 349a. Translation by Csapo and Slater (1994: 149).
actual spending on this program and on its armed forces shows this particular complaint to be a wild exaggeration. At the time of Demosthenes’ speech, for example, an Athenian fleet normally numbered 30 triremes and was probably away on average for 6 months.\(^{103}\) Such a naval expedition would have cost the polis and upper-class trierarchs 202 talents.\(^{104}\) The 36 talents which the Athenians of the time spent on the Great Panathenaea and the City Dionysia would have kept this apostolos at sea for only 1 month.\(^{105}\) Demosthenes even undercut his own complaint about Athenian funding priorities, when he costed the small amphibious force that he was proposing at more than 90 talents (4.28). Indeed what the Athenians spent on their armed forces manifestly ‘dwarfed all other public expenditure’ combined.\(^{106}\) From 432 to 423 public spending alone was 1500 talents on average per year and ranged between 30 and 100 per cent of this figure in the remainder of the Peloponnesian War.\(^{107}\) During the 370s and the 360s the average annual total of public and private spending on the armed forces was more than 500 talents.\(^{108}\)

In spite of the fact that the classical Athenians spent more money on waging war than on all other public business, they still placed a very high priority on funding their festivals generously (Ar. Plut. 1161-3; Isoc. 4.45). For each celebration of the Great Panathenaea, for example, they authorised the spending of between 10 and 15 talents of public funds (IG I\(^1\) 370.66-8; 375.3, 5-8; 378.14-15).\(^{109}\) In addition the elite Athenians who had volunteered or, if necessary, been conscripted to perform this festival’s liturgies probably contributed another 7 talents (e.g. Isae. 5.36; Lys. 21.1-2).\(^{110}\) From the 380s the olive oil which was needed for the Great Panathenaea’s prizes for sportsmen was acquired by a general levy on the oil-production of individual farmers on whose plots grew the so-called moriai or olive trees which were sacred to Athena (Ath. Pol. 60.2).\(^{111}\) They were found on ‘many’ plots of farmed

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\(^{103}\) For the return of Athenian fleets to this scale by 353/2, see Burckhardt 1995: 114; Cawkwell 1984: 334-5. The expeditions of the 360s, whose chronology is much better understood than the 350s because of the work of Julia Heskel, were certainly at sea for no less than 6 months. Iphicrates and his forces, for example, were at Amphipolis from September 369 to May 365 (Heskel 1997: 22-6, 40-6). Timotheus left Athens with 30 ships in July 366, took Samos in May 365, and then moved north for 2 years of campaigning in the Chalcidice (26-37, 43-52, 134-53). Ergophilus spent 6 months defending Sestus in 363/2 (Dem. 2.104; Heskel 1997: 85-8, 141-2). Timomachus campaigned in the region for the full term of his generalship in 362/1 ([Dem.] 50), while Cephisodotus commanded a small fleet in the Hellespont for 7 months in 360/59 (Dem. 23.165; Heskel 1997: 54-60)

\(^{104}\) In the fourth century Athens paid a sailor 1 drachma a day, which, at 200 crew per trireme, translated into a salary bill of 1 talent per ship per month (Loomis 1998: 57-8). The average of the surviving figures for what wealthy citizens spent as trierarchs is 4436 drachmas (Pritchard 2012c: 28, 28 n. 71)

\(^{105}\) The cost of each festival is canvassed immediately below.

\(^{106}\) Van Wees 2000a: 81

\(^{107}\) Pritchard 2012c: 39-45.

\(^{108}\) Pritchard 2012c: 45-57.


\(^{110}\) Pritchard 2012c: 28-32.

land across Attica (Lys. 7.7, 24-5, 29). In order to fill the 2100 amphorae which were given out as prizes, this levy would have had to have raised no less than 1925 metrētai or 75.8 cubic tons of olive oil. Although this oil was acquired through a general tax in kind and not by purchase, estimating as best as we can its market value clarifies how much Attic farmers were required by the dēmos to contribute to this heortē. As a metrētēs of olive oil probably cost 17 drachmas (see above), this private contribution came to more than 5 talents. The total of public and private spending on this four yearly festival was, then, over 25 talents or slightly more than 6 talents on average per annum. Peter Wilson has undertaken by far the most thorough estimate of how much was spent on the yearly festival of the City Dionysia, which is close to 29 talents. Between 430 and 350 the entire program of polis-administered festivals consumed no less than 100 talents of public and private money every year. This was comparable to the running costs of the democracy itself and was most probably larger than the public income of an average-sized Greek city. Thus even though the Athenian dēmos treated war-making as their top funding priority, clearly they still secured an undeniably large amount of public and private money to run their program of festivals.

The Athenian democracy also put great store in the development and maintenance of public infrastructure for athletic education. Thus leading politicians clearly got ahead in their agônes for pre-eminence with each other by taking care of the city’s three gymnasia or publicly owned fields for athletic training (Dem. 24.114), which were located just outside the city’s defensive walls. For example, in the fifth century Cimon, following the precedent of the tyrants (Ath. 609d; Paus. 1.30.1), spent his own money on providing proper running tracks and landscaping for the Academy (Plut. Cim. 13.7), while Pericles used public funds to renovate the Lyceum (Harp. s.v. ‘Lyceum’) and Alcibiades proposed a law and modified another concerning Cynosarges (Ath. 234e; IG I3 134). In the later fourth century Lycurgus oversaw not only the completion of the stone theatre of Dionysus but also the building of the Panathenaic stadium and the renovating of the Lyceum.

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113 For the restored number of prize amphorae, see Shear 2003: 102.
114 Pritchard 2012c: 32, table 1.
117 Hansen costs the democracy’s honorary decrees and its payment of assembly goers, councillors and jurors at 92 to 112 talents per year in the 330s (1991: 98, 150, 189, 241, 254-5). Its salary bill was probably only slightly less a century earlier (Kallet 1998: 46). At the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War the annual public income of Athens was 1000 talents (Xen. An. 7.1.27). At this time, however, Athens enjoyed significant imperial income and was the centre of long-distance trade in the Aegean, while its territory and citizen population were around twenty times larger than an average-sized polis (Hansen 2007: 77-84; Hansen and Nielsen 2004: 70-3). Thus its annual income would have been of a different order of magnitude to the vast majority of Greek cities.
119 IG II² 457b5-9; Hyp. fr. 118 Jensen; Paus. 1.26.16; Plut. Mor. 841c-d, 852a-e.
treasurers also kept a close watch on the finances of these athletics fields (e.g. IG I3 369), while the dēmos introduced a poll tax on each of the city’s horsemen, hoplites and archers, which raised several talents every year, for the upkeep of the Lyceum (IG I3 138). This gymnasion at least had a public epistatēs or overseer and publicly owned sporting equipment (Hyp. I fr. 6 column 26 Jensen). The classical Athenians, finally, witnessed a massive expansion in the number of privately owned palaistrai or wrestling schools (Pl. Lys. 203a-4e), whose personnel and opening hours they closely regulated (Aeschin. 1.9-11).

3.3. The positive depiction of athletics in political and legal speeches

The playwrights and public speakers of the Athenian democracy depicted athletes and athletics regularly and in overwhelmingly positive terms. Comedians and tragedians were, of course, members of the Athenian upper class. Nonetheless their plays were performed as part of the dramatic agōnes of two city-based festivals for Dionysus. While the judging of these contests was formally in the hands of randomly selected judges, victory ultimately depended on the vocal responses of the predominantly lower-class audience. Poets, then, were compelled to tailor their plays to the dramaturgical expectations, the morality and the points of view of non-elite citizens. Under the democracy litigants and politicians faced a comparable performance dynamic: their agōnes or debates were decided by the votes of lower-class jurors, assembly goers or councillors. As a result, wealthy contenders also sought to negotiate the perceptions of poor citizens. Thus this overwhelmingly positive treatment of athletes and athletics – which also occurs in satyric drama – serves as clear evidence of the high estimation which the Athenian lower class had of athletics and its abiding interest in the world of athletes. Thus the preference which the classical Athenians showed for athletic agōnes in their state-sponsored program of festivals and their careful management of the infrastructure of athletic education can be attributed to their very positive evaluation of athletes and athletics.

For their part Athenian public speakers represented hē gymnastikē or the educational discipline of athletics as an unambiguously good thing for Athens and individual citizens alike. They assumed that their predominantly lower-class audiences not only had a good general knowledge of athletics but also judged it very highly. For example, Aeschines stated that the fathers of contemporary Athenians had recognised to kalon or the good which comes ‘from athletics’ and hence encouraged fellow citizens to practise it by banning slaves from doing so (1.138). In his educational treatise on anti-logical argumentation for forensic oratory Antiphon similarly argued that athletics benefitted the polis and its members. In one of its

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120 Jameson 1980.
121 Chapter 1.
122 For the treatment of athletics in satyr plays, see chapter 4.
123 Traditional education is consistently represented as a good thing in Athenian legal speeches; see Todd 2007: 340-1 with references.
124 For this genre of work by the new intellectuals or sophists, see Yunis 1998: 235-6.
sample speeches a father argues that his son’s death in the class of a paidotribēs (‘athletics-teacher’) was entirely unanticipated, as he believed that ‘good’ would accrue to both of them by the educating of his son in this discipline ‘from which the community especially profits (ex hōn malista to koinon ὁϕελείται – Antiph. 3.2.3)’. In forensic and deliberative oratory ἥ γυμναστικῆ, along with the disciplines of letters and music, were presented as the normal course of education (Aeschin. 1.9-11), which a paires or boy was expected to complete as long as his family had the requisite prosperity (e.g. Dem. 27.46; Isae. 9.28). 125 By doing so, it was said, a boy would grow up to be khrēsimos tēi polei or good and useful to the city (Aeschin. 1.11; cf. Ar. Nub. 959; Hyp. 6. 8-9).

Politicians and litigants usually noted whether someone whom they had mentioned in a speech had been an athletic competitor or athletics-teacher. As public speakers were almost always not discussing athletics when such a descriptor was added, they presumably did so to help their predominantly lower-class audience to identify somebody. The level of athletic knowledge which they assumed is striking. In identifying an individual as part of the athletic scene public speakers noted the particular event or area in which they had specialised (e.g. Hyp. Lyc. Fr. 46 column 5 Jensen). Thus Antidorides, for example, is called ὁ stadiadromōn or one-time stadiion-runner ([Dem.] 59.121; cf. 124), Anticles ‘the stadiodromos’ (Aeschin. 1.157) and Eupolemos ‘the paidotribēs’ (1.102). Nor did they confine themselves to contemporary athletes. Aeschines, for example, described Timesitheus as ‘the runner’ (1.156), even though he had not been an athletic competitor for around fifty years. 126

In a similar vein he and Demosthenes assumed that jurors would know of an Olympic victory from the early fifth century (Aeschin. 3.189; Dem. 18.318-19).

Public speakers even noted the athletic careers of foreigners. Alexander the Great, for example, was said to have established Chaeron, ‘the wrestler’, as tyrant of Pellene and reinstated ‘the paidotribēs’ at Sicyon (Dem. 17.10-11, 16). Clearly it was also thought useful to mention a foreigner’s sporting specialisation, even if he had not practised it for a very long time; for Aeschines described one of the three presbeis or ambassadors whom Chalcis had sent to Athens in 342 as the dolikhos-runner (3.91). Because a presbeus was, as the word suggests, an elderly citizen, this ambassador had not been a long-distance runner for several decades, when he was mentioned in an Athenian law-court speech of 330. In his comedies of the later fifth century Aristophanes similarly mentioned foreign athletes whose heyday had been one or more generations earlier (e.g. Ach. 208-18; Vesp. 1190, 1205-7). 127 That the Athenian dēmos were intensely interested in the careers of foreign sportsmen is stated explicitly by Demosthenes. In support of his request that the jurors treat the hubris of Meidias seriously he spoke of past victims of such verbal or physical assault who had taken the law into their own hands by killing the alleged assailant on the spot (21.71-4). His first example concerned the confrontation between a certain Euthynus, ‘the

125 Chapter 2
one-time wrestler’, and Sophilus, ‘the pancratiast’, at a private party in Samos (71). ‘All or, if this is not the case, many know’, Demosthenes tells the jurors, what happened. This noting of sporting backgrounds in public discourse presupposed that lower-class citizens knew a great deal about athletics. Public speakers would have only persisted with this practice if the dēmos did indeed follow very closely the careers of contemporary athletic competitors and what was said about the athletes of previous generations. In light of this widespread passion for competitive sport Athenian athletes were clearly conspicuous residents of the city.

Athenian public speakers drew on the world of athletic agōnes for persuasive figures of speech. As a metaphor only works if the ‘vehicle’ which is used to represent something else is well known, this practice also required lower-class audiences to have a good general knowledge of athletics. We have already seen that Aeschines regularly introduced such turns of phrase in support of his membership of the city’s upper class, which had been challenged by Demosthenes. But he was far from alone in his employment of such metaphors (e.g. Dem. 4.5; 25.7, 97; Lycurg. 1.49; cf. Thuc. 2.46). Indeed much can be learnt about this practice in the opposing speeches of these two political rivals in the trial of Ctesiphon, in 330, on the charge of having introduced an unconstitutional proposal. While this legal agōn ostensibly concerned the legality of Ctesiphon’s proposal of several years earlier to honour Demosthenes as a civic benefactor, both of them focussed on whether Demosthenes’ political leadership, during the war which had ended with the defeat at Chaeronea, warranted such public recognition. Aeschines predictably argued that he had fallen far short of the standard of fifth-century politicians and so was not deserving of the city’s highest civic honours. Among other tactics, Demosthenes countered this by drawing an analogy with the victory of an Athenian boxer at the Olympics of 360. Philammon was not denied the victor’s crown, Demosthenes argued, because he was weaker than Glaucus of Carythus, who had competed in the early fifth century, or other earlier athlētai (18.318-19). Rather he was proclaimed the victor, because he was better than the competitors whom he had faced (319). So too, Demosthenes concluded, the jurors must judge him against other contemporary politicians. Aeschines apparently learnt in advance of his rival’s intent to rely on this analogy and decided to question its applicability before Demosthenes could introduce it; for he claimed that in using this figure of speech Demosthenes would be erroneously assuming that the jurors did not know that while the agōn for boxers was against competitors at hand, the contest for recognition as a civic benefactor was against the unchanging standard of aretē (3.189).

In his prosecution speech Aeschines nevertheless went on to introduce several athletic figures of speech. In support of his claim, for example, that the city would

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129 Chapter 2.
130 For the career of Philammon, see Kyle 1987: cat. no. A66.
have better politicians if it honoured fewer of them with crowns he developed his own Olympics analogy (3.178-80). No one, he suggests, would train for the pankration or any other ‘heavy’ event at Olympia or in the other Panhellenic games, if the crown went, not to the best athlete, but to the one who had successfully intrigued to win it (179). Athletes train hard, only because they know that victories are rare and their rewards very valuable. As agonothetai politikēs aretēs or games-judges of political virtue, Aeschines continues, the Athenians, then, should only give ‘gifts’ to a few ‘worthy’ politicians (180). Towards the end of his speech, finally, he employed (as sport commentators regularly do today) a mixed metaphor to urge the jurors to be on guard against the tricky oratory of his rival (205-6). As Demosthenes will undoubtedly try to avoid addressing the substance of the alleged offence, which is a standard palaisma or wrestling trick of the law-courts, Aeschines asks the jurors to spar with him constantly so that he is forced to do so, ‘just as you see the boxers contend with each other for position in the athletic contests’.

Such turns of phrase imply more than a familiarity with athletics on the part of jurors. These speakers would have based arguments on Olympic analogies and Aeschines would have only asked his audience to be boxers only if lower-class Athenians thought positively enough of athletics to find such figures persuasive. Indeed the fact that Aeschines felt it necessary to spoil his opponent’s figurative use of the Olympics suggests that these games could serve as a touchstone of how things should be organised. It is notable, too, that in drawing on Panhellenic games to help win over jurors neither author made use of equestrian events. Such sporting metaphors simply may have been less persuasive than athletic ones to lower-class Athenians.

Away from the legal and political agōnes of the Athenian democracy athletics was not always represented in such one-sidedly positive terms. Certainly its relative worth was called into question by the intellectuals who appeared in increasing numbers, from the mid-fifth century, to provide the Athenian upper class with higher education which took their sons beyond the three traditional disciplines of athletics, music and letters. These polymaths, who came mainly from other poleis, had diverse research interests and conducted classes in disciplines which ranged from astronomy and cosmology to, for example, hoplomakhia or weapons training (e.g. Ar. Nub. 359-60; Pl. Phd. 108d-13c). In tune with their preference for explaining natural phenomena in profane terms they often aired unconventional views about the nature of the gods. But the most popular classes of these so-called sophists were in public speaking, as elite families wanted their sons to be capable of

131 In old comedy there are metaphors involving palaisma which characterise comparable phenomena (e.g. Ar. Ran. 689-91, 876-7).
134 For the appearance and activities of the sophists, see, for example, de Romilly 1992; Goldhill 1986a: 222-43; Joyal, McDougall and Yardley 2009: 59-87; Muir 1985; Wallace 1998; 2007; Yunis 1998.
winning legal and political contests in which they would probably compete as men. This instruction covered the forms and commonplaces of forensic and deliberative oratory and, more controversially, the techniques of so-called anti-logical argumentation, which helped a speaker to argue either side of a case with equal force (e.g. Pl. *Euthd.* 275d-7c). Among the locally born intellectuals in Athens were Plato and Isocrates, who, in the early fourth century, founded ongoing schools and began producing oeuvres of sample speeches, treatises and philosophy for upper-class readers.

The sophists as a group had a decidedly complex relationship with athletics. Socrates and other famous intellectuals, for example, met or taught their students in the city’s *gymnasia* (e.g. Pl. *Euthd.* 271a-d; *Lys.* 203a-b; *Symp.* 223d), while Plato set up his school in the Academy and Aristotle did the same in the Lyceum half a century later. The anonymous life of Isocrates states that his school was ‘near the *gymnasion* of the Lyceum’ (116-7). ‘There was in fact a strong tendency in the classical period for philosophy to commend and encourage both physical health and the exercise needed to maintain it, though naturally counting intellectual health an even greater blessing.’ Indeed Plato and Isocrates were the first writers to describe traditional education systematically and to develop the abstract terminology for doing so. In addition intellectuals sought to justify their newfangled disciplines by depicting them as analogous to *hē gymnastikē*. Thus Socrates, according to Plato (*Tht.* 153b), argued that higher education was essential for mental fitness just as athletics was for physical fitness; Antisthenes, one of his followers, used the same analogy (fr. 163 Giannantoni); and Isocrates assimilated the training which he gave in public speaking to the classes of the *paidotribēs* (e.g. 15.180-5, 266).

Yet for the sake of both defending the higher education which they were pioneering and also building up their own student numbers the same intellectuals argued that their lessons were more valuable than athletics. In so doing they were able to draw on the poetry of Xenophanes of Colophon, as this itinerant intellectual of a century earlier had repeatedly claimed that his *sophia* or wisdom was better than athletics, which was useless and unprofitable (Ath. 414c; cf. Diog. Laert. 9.18-20). In a surviving fragment of his poetry Xenophanes argues that the sporting victors of the Olympics are unworthy of the *proedria*, *sītēsis* and gifts which they receive from a city (fr. 2.5-10 West), whereas he is *axios* or worthy of them, because ‘my *sophiē* is better than the strength of men or horses’ (11-12). This custom is irrational, he continues, and it is not right to judge strength over ‘good *sophiē*’ (13-14), for an athlete would never improve a city’s *eunomia* or good order nor its public finances (15-23). Athenian intellectuals, in fact, relied heavily on this fragment of

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137 Joyal, McDougall and Yardley 2009: 88-120.
140 Chapter 2.
Xenophanes, regularly repeating its argument with little or no adaptation.\footnote{Hubbard 2008: 387; Young 2005: 27-9.} ‘The intelligentsia continued to contend that the contribution of their wisdom far outshone the achievements attained with the smell of sweat.’\footnote{Tyrell 2004: 176.} Most famously, Plato had Socrates claim in his trial of 399 that he deserved sitēsis more than the equestrian victors of the Olympic Games, because his encouragement of critical thinking among the Athenians had brought greater public benefit (Ap. 36d-e).\footnote{J. P. Jones 2009: 166-89. It is striking that Socrates does not, like other intellectuals, criticise athletic victors (S. G. Miller 2000: 280; 2004a: 234) Tarrant 2003: 355.} Antisthenes apparently argued that the ‘crown from education’ was greater than that of the Panhellenic games (fr. 162 Giannantoni).\footnote{Tarrant 2003: 355.} Likewise, Isocrates repeatedly reproduced the argument of Xenophanes in his works for upper-class readers (e.g. 15.301-2; L. 4.5). In his Panegyricus, for example, he claims (4.1-2):

I have often marvelled at those who convened the Panhellenic festivals and established athletic contests, because they considered sporting success to be worthy of such great gifts, but to the men who bore toils in private for the common good and prepared their souls so that they could be of benefit to everybody else, to these men they gave no recognition. It was more reasonable for them to show care for such men; for, if the athletes acquired twice as much strength, nobody else would have anything more, but, if one man thinks rightly, all who wish to share his insight would benefit.

Lower-class Athenians harboured negative misperceptions about these teachers of higher education.\footnote{Muir 1985: 211.} This is hardly surprising, as they could not afford their tuition fees and so only acquired a sense of what they taught from the occasional displays which individual sophists gave in public and from what others claimed about them.\footnote{Goldhill 1986a: 228.} A persistent view of the dēmos was that Socrates and other intellectuals wasted time in verbose talk about subjects of no practical value.\footnote{E.g. Ameipias fr. 9 Kassel and Austin; Ar. Nub. 931; Ran. 1491-9; Eqg. 1373-87; Eup. fr. 157 Kassel and Austin; Lys. fr. 1 Thalheim; Carey 2000.} As a consequence of their imperfect knowledge of higher education, lower-class citizens also grew concerned that these teachers were schooling youths in the art of making a weaker argument stronger and were encouraging them to repudiate traditional religion, which, they feared, could make them behave immorally.\footnote{E.g. Aeschin. 1.173; Ar. Nub. 112-18, 423-4, 882-5; 1019-23, 1071-82, 1321-492; fr. 506 Kassel and Austin; Muir 1985: 213; Wallace 2007: 230. For the possible prosecutions of intellectuals for asebeia or impiety in Athens of the later fifth century, see Muir 1985: 215-16 with primary sources.} Jacqueline de Romilly observes that the dēmos also misperceived the complex relationship which these figures had with athletics.\footnote{De Romilly 1992: 37-9.} Probably because they had witnessed or, at least, heard of the sophists’ envy of Panhellenic victors, they believed that their newfangled classes might come at the expense of hē gymnastikē.
Aristophanes famously made this concern one of the presuppositions of his comedy *Clouds*, in which the students of the ‘new education’ do indeed abandon the lessons of the athletics-teacher and generally neglect their physical wellbeing (see part 3.4 below). This anxiety featured too in public speeches. For example, as part of his character-assassination of Demosthenes in their legal agôn of 330, Aeschines claimed that his rival had no former suggumnastai or companions of the athletics field among his supporters in court; for, as a young man, he had allegedly neglected the euexia or fitness of his body and studied instead the tekhnê of forensic oratory (3.255-6). In both genres, finally, a prominent individual apparently could be accused of making young men abandon athletics by encouraging them to debate esoteric subjects or to initiate legal prosecutions.\(^{151}\)

Another criticism of athletics to be heard in classical Athens was that sporting success was less worthy of recognition than courage on the battlefield. In Greek literature the first example of this criticism is fragment 12 of the surviving poetry of Tyrtaeus. Here this poet of seventh-century Sparta contends, against what others say, that even if a man surpasses everyone in wealth, beauty and the other traditional grounds for distinction, he himself would ‘neither remember nor mention’ him unless he is courageous (fr. 12.1-9 West).\(^{152}\) For Tyrtaeus aretê consists only of enduring the horrible sights of battle and fighting at close quarters and is ‘a common good for the city and the dêmos’ (10-19). Among the five personal qualities which he judges inferior to courage and the one which he mentions first is ‘aretê in running and boxing’ (2-5). This poem and others of Tyrtaeus were certainly known to upper-class Athenians and may even have been among those which boys of both social classes memorised in the lessons of the grammatistês.\(^{153}\) Indeed in a clear example of their narcissism the classical Athenians erroneously believed that Tyrtaeus had been an Athenian before he was asked by the Spartans to establish their famed system of militarism (Lycurg. 1.106; Pl. Leg. 629a; Paus. 4.15.6).\(^{154}\)

In writing for upper-class readers intellectuals quoted fragment 12 of Tyrtaeus approvingly or similarly denigrated athletics in relation to military performance. In *Laws*, for example, Plato quoted this fragment to emphasise how his dialogue’s Athenian, Cretan and Spartan interlocutors agreed on the primacy of bravery as a personal virtue (629a-b; cf. 660e-1d). Isocrates, likewise, valued military over athletic victory in his *Archidamus*, in which he imagined what Archidamus the Third might have said against the demand made in the mid-360s for Sparta to recognise the independence of the Messenians. In this piece of rhetorical display this Spartan king claims that in the panêgureis or Panhellenic festivals of yesteryear the Spartans were more admired than the athletic victors because of their military aretê and power

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\(^{151}\) E.g. [Andoc.] 4.22; Ar. Nub. 417, 1052-4; Ran. 1068-71; cf. Eq. 1373-83; Thiercy 2003: 164-5.

\(^{152}\) For the mistaken impression which this fragment gives of Spartan attitudes to athletics, see chapter 4.

\(^{153}\) For this elite knowledge, see, for example, Lycurg. 1.107; Pl. Leg 629b. For Tyrtaeus as a possible school text, see Girard 1891: 147-8.

\(^{154}\) Kyle 1987: 127 n. 15.
(Isoc. 6.93-5), whereas now, he concludes, they feel shame for their military decline (5) and would be ridiculed if they attended Panhellenic games. In Erōtikos, finally, which was incorrectly attributed to Demosthenes in antiquity, the beloved who is the subject of this prose-work is commended for judging that ‘those training for the running events add nothing to their andreia nor morality, while those practising boxing and similar events ruin their body and mind’ (61.24).

By reason of their access to higher education and prose literature the Athenians of the upper class were very familiar with the view that intellectuals were more deserving of public honours than sporting victors and that courage was a higher virtue than athletic prowess. It is significant, however, that when it came to addressing predominantly lower-class audiences, they were manifestly reluctant to rehearse such criticisms of athletics. Thus these ‘critical voices’ may have ‘a disturbing modern ring to them but historically they represent at best an ineffectual minority viewpoint. The very critics themselves testify to the spread and popularity of civic athletes’.155

There is, in fact, no surviving forensic or deliberative speech which questions the extraordinary honours which the democracy gave its sporting victors. Instead public speakers consistently represented such individuals as public benefactors of the highest order and hence as deserving of the gratitude of the dēmos (see part 3.1 above). Demosthenes even argued that the Athenian people avoided the kind of envy of Panhellenic victors which we first encounter in Xenophanes. In a law-court speech of 355/4 he presented the city’s treatment of these athletes as evidence of its aversion to envy (20.140-1). ‘And for all time’, he writes, ‘you have given the greatest gifts to the winners of the athletic contests (tous gumnikous agônas) at the crown games and you have not, because these gifts belong to a few, borne ill will, out of envy, towards those possessing them nor distributed lesser honours on account of these factors’ (141). Interestingly Demosthenes here limits this magnanimity of the dēmos to athletic victors. He is not claiming that the Athenians avoided criticism of the winners of the chariot races or other equestrian events.

Lycurgus was the only public speaker of the Athenian democracy to come close to repeating Tyrtaeus’ valuing of military over athletic aretē. But he was apparently hesitant to do so and did not follow Plato in quoting fragment 12. In his prosecution of Leocrates, who, it was alleged, had fled Athens to avoid military service at Chaeronea, Lycurgus argued that those who had died at their posts in that battle had chosen to do so, because the Athenians alone knew how to honour agathoi andres or courageous men (1.46-51). Whereas the other Greeks, he explains, set up in their marketplaces statues of athletes victorious at Panhellenic games, the Athenians, in contrast, only honour ‘agathoi generals’ and the tyrant-slayers in this manner (51).156

Lycurgus is arguing here that the Athenians encourage military aretē by publicly rewarding martial, not athletic success, which presupposes that military and sporting performance rely on different personal virtues.


156 For this practice of setting up statues of athletic victors, see Currie 2005: 142-8.
All of this was very close to what Tyrtaeus had argued and, as Lycurgus did with another of this poet’s fragments in the same speech (1.107-8), he could have quoted fragment 12 in support of this argument. Certainly he needed to do something to strengthen what really was unpersuasive. While the Athenian dēmos did begin, in the early fourth century, to honour some of their victorious generals with statues, they otherwise gave them the same civic honours as Panhellenic victors and believed that athletic victors endured the same ordeals and exhibited the same aretē as soldiers did when fighting for the city.¹⁵⁷ Yet Lycurgus chose to introduce next, not Tyrtaeus, but a different point about this honorific practice of the Athenians (1.51): ‘It is not easy to find such men, who are few, even from the whole of Greece, whereas the winners of the Panhellenic games are from many places and so are easy to see.’ This introduction of new grounds for commending the Athenians, namely their recognition of ‘few’ rather than ‘many’ as civic benefactors (cf. Aeschin. 3.178-80), sat awkwardly with the presupposition about military and athletic performance, thus undermining the argument about the way in which the setting up of statues by the Athenians made them courageous. But it probably saved Lycurgus from giving the impression that he was criticising athletes, for which he may have felt incoherence a small price to pay.

I am struck by the fact that this chapter of Lycurgus’ long speech appears to be the only serious criticism of athletics in surviving public oratory. This is especially noteworthy in view of the sustained public criticism of other upper-class pursuits in the Athenian democracy (see part 3.6 below). Clearly litigants and politicians believed that speaking negatively of athletics was a taboo of public discourse and so avoided doing so. The career of Isocrates provides a good example of this reticence. In his writings for upper-class readers he repeatedly argued that intellectuals were more deserving of civic honours than Panhellenic victors. But, as a logographos or hired speech writer for Athenian litigants, Isocrates may have once falsified the social background of some non-Athenian athletes to help win a case (16.33; cf. Aeschin. 1.132, 141), but he never rehearsed this criticism of Xenophanes nor made any other negative comments about Athenian athletes or athletics as a general activity.¹⁵⁸ Thus the public speakers of classical Athens tried to say only positive things about athletics, drew on the knowledge which lower-class Athenians had of athletics to help identify individuals and to craft persuasive figures of speech, and assiduously avoided criticising this upper-class activity for fear of alienating jurors or assembly goers.

3.4. Comic representations of athletics

The positive evaluation of athletics by the Athenian dēmos was also reflected in the irreverent comedies of the later fifth and early fourth centuries. Comic poets may have ridiculed a wide range of conspicuous citizens and criticised contemporary

¹⁵⁷ For the setting up of statues for Athenian generals, see Shear 2007. For the perceived overlap between athletic and military performance, see chapter 5.
¹⁵⁸ Pace Kyle 1987: 152.
affairs, but they carefully avoided targeting known athletes for comic abuse and making negative comments about athletics. In their reasonably frequent depictions of this activity they also assumed it to be an overwhelmingly good thing and regularly mined it for persuasive figures of speech.

Surviving old comedy gives the impression that ‘anyone and everyone in the public eye’ was subject to comic ridicule.\(^{159}\) In an important study of known kōmōidoumenoi (‘targets of comic ridicule’) Alan Sommerstein shows that most were politically active members of the city’s upper class, such as ambassadors, generals, priests, magistrates and politicians.\(^{160}\) The second largest group of victims, his study suggests, were those whom the poets considered one way or another to be rival contestants.\(^{161}\) They included not just fellow comedians but also tragedians, dithyrambic poets, dancers, actors and musicians. The poets of old comedy also mocked by name well known figures of the marketplace, such as lower-class craftsmen and retailers, and upper-class citizens who were reputedly spending too much of their time and money on drinking parties.\(^{162}\) Contrary to what Pseudo-Xenophon suggests (2.18), they also ridiculed the Athenian dēmos itself (Isoc. 8.14): comic actors regularly slandered theatre goers as morally flawed or criminally inclined (e.g. Ar. Nub. 1098-9; Ran. 274-6; Eccl. 434-40), while plays habitually cast aspersions on the deliberative capacities of the Athenians as a whole.\(^{163}\)

Notwithstanding the breadth of ridicule and the apparent lack of discrimination in picking targets, comic poets avoided mocking one class of conspicuous Athenians. As Sommerstein explains, ‘…it is remarkable that one group that seems to be almost completely unrepresented among Athenian komodoumenoi is that of athletes: the only instance I can find is that of Autolycus.’\(^{164}\) Moreover, the sporting prowess of this particular individual was probably not the reason for his selection as a target of comic abuse. Autolycus won the boys’ pankration at the Great Panathenaea of 422/1 (Xen. Symp. 1.2) and, a year later, was the eponymous figure of a play by Eupolis, which ‘jeered at’ (khleusasdei) his victory (fr. 63 Kassel and Austin). Despite its name, this comedy was not a sustained satire of Autolycus, but an ‘essentially domestic drama’, whose characters included Eupolis and Aristophanes as comic rivals, the father of Autolycus, Lycon (fr. 62 Kassel and Austin), and the boy’s actual erastēs or lover, Callias.\(^{165}\) Even without his sporting success, Autolycus’ real-life links to the last two characters would have made him a ripe target for comic ridicule. His well heeled

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\(^{159}\) Sommerstein 1996: 333. In the same vein Isocrates rehearsed in his pamphlets general criticisms of Athenian war-making which simply could not be aired in the public fora of the democracy (Hunt 2010a: 232-3; 2010b: 262-4; Pritchard 2010: 41).

\(^{160}\) Sommerstein 1996: 327-9, 342-8 with ancient testimonia.


\(^{164}\) Sommerstein 1996: 331.

father and lover were already popular kômôidoumenoi in the late 420s.\textsuperscript{166}

Aristophanes satirised Lycon as a habitué of drinking parties in 422/1 (Vesp. 1301-2), while Wine Flask by Cratinus and Cities and Friends by Eupolis ridiculed his domestic arrangements, especially the ‘shameful deeds’ of his wife.\textsuperscript{167} Likewise, the same poets consistently characterised Callias, one of the city’s richest men, as overly fond of the drinking party and its consumable staples (e.g. Ar. Ran. 427-30).\textsuperscript{168}

Athenian comedians of the classical period and beyond might have treated athletics as a stock topic of their drama, but, in contrast to other upper-class activities, they did not subject it to sustained parody or serious criticism.\textsuperscript{169} This is not to say that athletics and athletes as a class were never the butt of jokes. For example, a fragment of new comedy has an athlete speak in comically inflated terms about his eating habits (Theophilus fr. 8 Kassel and Austin). We find a fifth-century parallel for this joke in a satyr play of Achaius, called Games, where a mention of the specialised, rich diets of sportsmen sets up a gibe about the proverbial gluttony of the Boeotians (fr. 3 Snell, Kannicht and Radt; cf. Ath. 417c, 417f-18a).\textsuperscript{170} For their part the poets of old comedy accused contemporary Athenians of neglecting athletics and recognised the wrestling school as ‘the prime venue of pederastic courtship’.\textsuperscript{171}

As cited by Athenaeus (408d-e) a fragment of the later fifth-century comedy Demes by Eupolis seems to criticise athletes much more strongly: ‘And if someone is first in running (prôtos dramôn), he takes hold of a hand-washing basin (kheironiptron). But when a man is a good and useful citizen and, being useful, beats everyone, there is no hand-washing basin.’ Apparently taking kheironiptron here as a metonym for the ritual hand washing of public dining, David Larmour interprets this fragment as the ‘standard complaint’, first made by Xenophanes (see above), that good and wise men are more deserving of sitêsis than the victors of mere sporting competitions.\textsuperscript{172} While attractive, this interpretation ignores an important textual problem and the possibility of an alternate, metaphorical reading. This fragment is also cited by three lexicographical sources, who, in its first line, read balôn (‘hitting’) instead of Athenaeus’ dramôn (‘running’).\textsuperscript{173} The editors of Eupolis usually err on the side of caution and hence accept the better attested balôn (e.g. fr. 129 Kassel and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{166} For his and Autolycus’ membership of the city’s elite, see Kyle 1987: 198; Storey 1985: 322-4 pace Fisher 1998a: 99.
  \item \textsuperscript{167} See the scholia on Ar. Lys. 270; Pl. Ap. 23e.
  \item \textsuperscript{168} Sommerstein 1996: 331, 351 with the ancient testimonia.
  \item \textsuperscript{169} Pace Hubbard 2008: 387. For example, Alexis, Philemon and Theophilus, writing between the later fourth and early third centuries, each called a comedy Pancratiaist. See Alexis fr. 173 and Theophilus fr. 8 Kassel and Austin (cf. Ath. 242c-d, 417b).
  \item \textsuperscript{170} For the specialised diets of athletes, see chapter 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{171} For comedy’s recognition of pederastic homosexuality in the wrestling school, see, for example, Ar. Av. 136-42; Nub. 177-9, 972-8; Pax 762-3; Vesp. 1025; Eup. fr. 65 Kassel and Austin. Quotation from Hubbard 2003b: 4. Cf. S. G. Miller 2004a: 189-93; Thiery 2003: 165-6.
  \item \textsuperscript{172} Larmour 1999: 43. Certainly at an upper-class dinner and drinking party this ritual of hand washing took place after the meal and before the drinking of the sumposion proper (see Vickers 1978: 11, 16 with primary sources).
  \item \textsuperscript{173} Storey 2003: 141-2 with references.
\end{itemize}
Austin), which points, not to athletics, but to the drinking game of *kottabos*, where each symposiast tried to hit a target first with the dregs of his wine.\(^{174}\)

However, even if we take a risk with Athenaeus’ *dramōn*, what else we know of this comedy makes a metaphorical reading no less likely than a literal one. Comic poets habitually drew on the world of athletics to represent the debates of politicians and their struggles for pre-eminence (see below). This play is no exception, as a character suggests that Pericles, ‘like good runners’, always came from behind to beat his opponents (fr. 102 Kassel and Austin). In addition Demes complains about contemporary leaders being markedly less talented and morally reputable than those of yesteryear, which is of course one of the genre’s stereotypical (and scurrilous) charges.\(^{175}\) For example, Aristophanes has a character explain (Eq. 191-3; cf. Ran. 718-37): ‘Political leadership is no longer for a man who is educated or good and useful in his habits but for one who is untaught and disgusting.’ Athenaeus’ version might actually be, then, a complaint about contemporary leading politicians enjoying *sitēsis*, which some certainly did (see part 3.1 above), while good and useful citizens get nothing. Whether accepting ‘hitting’ or ‘running’, we cannot (as Larmour does) interpret this fragment as evidence for any criticism of athletes.

Indeed whenever they turned to the topic of sport, something which they did quite often, the poets of old comedy followed the city’s public speakers in assuming athletics to be a very good thing. In *Clouds*, for example, Aristophanes couples the ‘old education’ (961), of which ἕ γυμναστική is the main component (e.g. 972-84, 1002-32), with cardinal virtues of the city and battlefield courage. The main protagonist of this comedy, Strepsiades, is being ruined by the debts which he has incurred as a result of his son’s chariot racing (1-24). His fantastic plan for escaping his predicament is to have his son, Phidippides, learn anti-logical argument at the hands of Socrates so that he can make the weaker argument stronger and hence prevail over his creditors in court (97-9, 112-13). Once Phidippides finally agrees to take up higher education (865), personifications of ‘the stronger argument’ and ‘the weaker argument’ emerge from Socrates’ school to debate whether traditional *paideia* or the ‘new education’ of the sophists is more profitable for a youth (889-1104). Stronger Argument suggests that the ‘old education’ flourished at the same time as two of the cardinal virtues of the Greek city, justice and *sōphrosunē* or moderation (960-2), and nurtured ‘the men who fought at Marathon’ (985-6). This education – according to this personification – ensures a boy will always have ‘a shining breast, lustrous skin, big shoulders, a small tongue, a big arse and a small penis’ (1010-14; cf. 1002). Depictions of athletes on red-figure pots reveal most of these to be the physical attributes of the ‘beautiful’ *meirakion* or young adult male.\(^{176}\)

\(^{174}\) For this drinking game, see Vickers 1978: 11, 14-16.

\(^{175}\) See especially Storey 2003: 116.

has emptied the wrestling schools of students (915-8, 1054); and encourages them to reject traditional morality (1019-23).

Although Weaker Argument ends up winning this verbal agôn, the play itself supports these complaints of his adversary: the students of the ‘new education’ are indeed pale skinned (103, 119-20, 186, 718, 1017, 1112, 1171) and physically weak (986-8) and avoid athletics (407), while Phidippides turns conventional morality upside down once fully trained by Socrates (1321-492).

Stronger Argument’s complaints exemplify a well known commonplace of old comedy, which sees a poet praise the values and practices of the ‘good old days’, while accusing contemporaries of abandoning them for the sake of questionable alternatives. Clouds also helps to explain why poets who aimed for as many laughs as possible subjected theatre goers to this kind of abuse. Although lower-class citizens were concerned that higher education might undermine hê gymnastikê (see above), they did not believe, contrary to the impression which Stronger Argument gives, that the ‘old education’ had been abandoned (or not yet at least) by the city. The intellectuals may have been offering new courses of study, but everyone could see that upper-class boys were still pursuing the three traditional disciplines of letters, athletics and music. Moreover, theatre goers – like the play’s chorus-leader (959-60) – would have agreed with Stronger Argument that education plays a critical part in imparting morality to the young; for they believed, as we have seen, that the solitary goal of education was to turn boys into courageous men. Thus the audience would have laughed at this charge of having abandoned the athletically centred education of Athenian forebears, because they appreciated that it was completely untrue, an egregious parody of a popular anxiety and hence another of the anticipated slanders of old comedy.

Aristophanes levels similar charges concerning athletics in Frogs, which was first staged at the Lenaea festival of 405. The first occurs in the play’s famous parabasis where Aristophanes draws an analogy between the city’s debasement of its once celebrated coinage and its current embrace of scallywags as political leaders (718-37). In particular, the chorus complain (727-33; cf. Eq. 180-3):

Of the citizens those we know to be well born, moderate (sôphronas) and just gentlemen who have been raised in wrestling schools, choruses and music we maltreat. We employ instead the copper coins that are foreigners,

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177 Tarrant 2003: 351.
179 Chapter 2.
180 Kyle misses this humorous purpose and hence interprets Aristophanes’ negative treatment of the contemporary practice of athletics as evidence of his personal conservative bias and preference for the ‘good old days’ (1987: 131-4). Likewise, Pascal Thiercy mistakenly takes Aristophanes’ critique as serious, even if he rightly explains how the poet never takes aim at athletics directly: ‘The criticism of sport by Aristophanes is not a genuine criticism of sport in itself, but of society in general: the satire is about sport as a representative institution of the city, a city which, according to him, is beginning to decline. It is why it is inevitable that the Athenians no longer maintain their standing in sporting contests…’ (2003: 166).
red headed [Thracian slaves], wicked men sprung from men wicked in everything, whom the city formerly would not even have willingly used as scapegoats.

This is another false complaint of decline from the ‘good old days’, since, throughout the classical period, the Athenians consistently believed that politicians had to be wealthy and well educated, if they were to advise and protect the city effectively (e.g. Ar. Eq. 147-224; Lys. 16.20-1; Dem. 18.256-67). Despite appearances, these lines, then, evidence not political change but continuity in Athenian expectations about their political leaders and – by extension – the popular ‘prejudice’ or ‘sentiment’ that ‘sport, like music, is the preserve of the upper classes.’ They also reveal how athletics was closely associated with justice and moderation and considered an important component in the normative education of the young. Later in the play Aeschylus suggests that by teaching adolescents to be chatterboxes Euripides has emptied the wrestling school (1068-71). ‘Because of a lack of athletic training (hup’ agumnasias),’ he continues, ‘nobody can carry a torch anymore’ (1087-8). Dionysus fully concurs, having recently witnessed a very poor performance by a ‘pale and fat’ torch-racer at the Great Panathenaea (1089-98). These particular complaints are part of a comically absurd attack by one dead tragedian against another in Hades and as such should not be taken at face value. To do otherwise, we must accept that Euripides has also turned good citizens into villains, encouraged the wealthy to dress as beggars to avoid trierarchies, and made the city’s politicians thieving and deceiving charlatans (1010-11, 1013-17, 1063-6, 1077-86). Thus here we have another slanderous joke turning around the ‘axis’ or underlying assumption that sport is normal and good.

Athletic metaphors, finally, were common in old comedy. Aristophanes introduced them as often as he did direct references to this activity and much more frequently than any public speaker. Admittedly there are a small number of chariot-racing metaphors in his plays (e.g. Pax 82-5; Vesp. 1022, 1049-50; cf. Nub. 429-30). ‘Imagery from equestrian events, however, is generally eschewed by Aristophanes.’ Certainly athletic figures of speech featured in representations of a reasonably wide range of activities. Aristophanes drew on the wrestling bout, for example, to depict the battlefield aretē of the former generation (Eq. 571-3), the reputed invincibility of the sophists’ anti-logical argumentation (Nub. 1228-9) and the

181 Chapter 1.
183 Pace Fisher 1998a: 90-1; Shear 2001: 337.
184 Pelling explains (2000: 126): ‘All fantasy, it is increasingly realised, is historically situated: not just in the sense that one cannot fantasise or dream about telephones or planes if one has never seen one, but much more substantially in terms of underlying thought patterns and aspirations. These may form part of the ‘axis’ around which any upside-down turnings take place…’
186 Larmour 1999: 108.
political chicanery of an Athenian oligarch (Ran. 689-91).\textsuperscript{187} However, he introduced such metaphors most often in his dramatisations of verbal agōnes between characters in competition with each other, which were another commonplace of the genre.\textsuperscript{188} Since there was, in contrast to the situation today, a significant overlap between the theatre-going public and those who watched sporting contests, Aristophanes could draw on this world of athletics to describe the preparations for, and the course and the outcome of, a variety of debates.\textsuperscript{189} In so doing he was employing agōnes which were well known and easy to understand and for which there was a rich descriptive terminology to represent other types of contest which were ‘less clearly defined in their own terms’.\textsuperscript{190}

Aristophanes may have sometimes turned to footraces for metaphors about political or other debates but his preferred ‘vehicle’ for such agōnes was once again wrestling (e.g. Nub. 1047, 1128-9).\textsuperscript{191} In Knights, for example, he employed such turns of phrase to portray the struggle of the Sausage Seller to win over the allegiance of the dēmos from a character who was a comic distortion of the city’s most powerful politician.\textsuperscript{192} Wrestling imagery is introduced early when the chorus describes how the parody of Cleon prosecutes innocent members of the upper class for personal gain (261-3): ‘And if you know of one of them who has led a quiet life and is naïve, you bring him back from the Chersonese, trip him up with slanders, twist back his shoulder and eat him whole.’ Later they urge the Sausage Seller on in his political campaign with the kind of advice which one would normally give a wrestler (386-9). As he readies for his first proper political agōn against Paphlagon, before the council of five hundred, another character encourages him to smear oil on his neck ‘in order that you can slip out of his diabolas or slanders’ (490-1). Even though he has not been trained in hē gymnastikē (1235-8), the Sausage Seller responds that this is the good advice which a paidotribēs would give (492). This joke demanded much of audience-members; for it to work they needed to understand that Aristophanes had absurdly changed wrestling from a metaphor for political debate to what politicians actually do with each other, that the use of oil by a wrestler in this manner was most probably cheating and that there was a pun here on the similarity of sound between diabolē (‘slander’) and dialabē (‘wrestler’s grip’).\textsuperscript{193} Indeed the wrestling metaphors of Aristophanes’ comedies as a whole provide ‘a nearly complete catalogue of the different positions and holds of this sport’.\textsuperscript{194} As this comic poet would have only persisted with such turns of phrase if they were intelligible to theatre goers, they

\textsuperscript{188} Taillardat 1965: 335-8.
\textsuperscript{189} Thiercy 2003: 15.
\textsuperscript{190} Larmour 1999: 9.
\textsuperscript{191} For such footrace-metaphors, see, for example, Ar. Eq. 676-7, 1158-61, 1350-3; Eup. fr. 102 Kassel and Austin For these wrestling metaphors, see Larmour 1999: 114; Taillardat 1965: 335-7; Thiercy 2003: 150.
\textsuperscript{192} Sommerstein 1981: 2.
\textsuperscript{194} Thiercy 2003: 150.
serve as further testimony of the detailed knowledge which lower-class Athenians had of athletics.

3.5. The athletic heroes of tragedy

Tragedy may have dramatised stories from the ancient times of the heroes, but in its frequent depictions of athletic competition and training it reflected back to Athenian theatre goers what they knew of the world of athletes. This genre also drew on this upper-class activity no less than comedy for persuasive figures of speech and employed it repeatedly as a reference-point for measuring fatal misperceptions of its characters. All of these treatments presupposed athletics to be an unambiguously good thing. Admittedly Euripides did rehearse the two standard complaints which contemporary intellectuals made of athletes in one of his tragedies. But his purpose in doing so was clearly to cast into doubt the ethical capacity of those who were repeating them. Since other instances of tragic criticism are very hard to find, this appears to be another genre of popular literature which shied away from any negative comments about athletics. Thus tragedy too bears witness to the high regard in which the Athenian dēmos held this upper-class activity.

The tragic poets notably extended first-hand knowledge of athletics beyond mythical figures, such as Heracles, who had reputedly founded historical games or been exemplary sportsmen, to the heroes as a group. Time and again they assumed that these characters of epic poetry competed in Panhellenic games, visited the Olympic sanctuary and entered local agônēs. Indeed in tragedy heroes are said to travel long distances for the sake of such local games (Eur. IT 435-8), while the famous warriors of the Trojan War compete in this second class of athletic agônēs (Eur. Alexander), practise discus-throwing and the race in armour (IA 206-30) or toiled in gymnasia as young men (Hel. 205-10; cf. 1469-75; Tro. 834). Such representations were modelled very closely on the world of contemporary athletes. In the Electra of Sophocles, for example, the city-ethnic of a victorious athlete at the Pythian Games is proclaimed as it was in classical times and the local games of his Men of Larissa are, like those of classical Attica (see part 3.2 above), open to foreigners and have bronze lebetes as prizes (fr. 378 Snell, Kannicht and Radt). Similarly the events which the heroes practise are always one and the same as contemporary athletics. In addition, the tragedians assumed that their heroes had been educated in hē gymnastikē. Thus in Phoenician Women Euripides has Polynices explain that the sight of the athletics-fields in which he was reared, along with the city’s river and sanctuaries, remind him of what he has lost as an exile (366-70). Elsewhere Euripides treated athletic education as the norm for heroes (e.g. Bacch.

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195 For this athletic métier of Heracles, see chapter 4.
196 For the associating of heroes with the Panhellenic games, see, for example, Eur. HF 957-62; Hipp. 1016-17; Soph. El. 47-50, 680-763; with Olympia, Eur. El. 781-2; cf. Soph. OT 901; and with local athletic contests, Aesch. fr. 36-9 Snell, Kannicht and Radt; Eur. ALC. 1025-36; Soph. Aj. 572-3; fr. 378, 380 Snell, Kannicht and Radt.
454-9; *El.* 528). As these figures, finally, were members of royal houses and generally close to the gods, the tragic poets understandably imagined them to be wealthy (e.g. Eur. *El.* 1-53; *Hipp.* 985-9, 1016-18; cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1449b24, 1453a9). This means that their depiction of heroes as athletes mirrored the popular view of sporting participation: it was the upper class which competed in athletics and should definitely attend the classes of the *paidotribēs.*

Three features of tragedy’s representation of athletics evidence once again the high estimation in which lower-class citizens held this upper-class activity. The first happens to be this remarkable treatment of heroes as if they were contemporary sportsmen. The classical Athenians regularly encountered these figures as exemplars of *aretē, sōphrosunē* and other virtues and their life stories as aetiologicals which legitimised, among other things, political institutions, religious rituals and exclusive claims of *poleis.* Admittedly heroes in some tragedies do make poor decisions in ethically complex situations. But even in the *Ajax* of Sophocles and other such plays there are normally others who model more appropriate behaviour. Moreover, in many other plays and – outside of the theatre – in public art and the classes of the *grammatistēs* the Athenians encountered heroes as straightforward models of normative behaviour. Thus these figures were regularly viewed positively as touchstones of tradition and morality. It seems very unlikely that the tragic poets would have associated this group of generally esteemed figures with athletics as indiscriminately as they did unless they knew that the bulk of theatre goers did indeed judge this activity favourably.

The second feature of tragedy bearing witness to this popular view of athletics is the genre’s explicit descriptions of athletic *agōnes.* The tragic poets described these games very positively, associated them just as regularly as Aristophanes did with cardinal virtues and treated them as a means for testing an individual’s possession of *aretē.* In the *Electra* of Sophocles, for example, the Pythian Games are called ‘the jewel of Greece’ (681-2). By competing in them as an athlete Orestes is said not only to have displayed *erga kai kratē* (‘exploits and feats of strength’) and thus won ‘the greatly honoured prize of victory’ but also to have revealed his inherited excellence (683-93). Sporting success apparently played a similar role in *Alexander* by Euripides; for in this fragmentary tragedy it is the eponymous hero’s winning of athletic *agōnes* which appears to be a clue that he is not the slave whom he has been raised to be but, in fact, the lost son of Troy’s royal house (fr. 60, 61a, 62d Snell, Kannicht and Radt). In *Alcestis* Euripides has Heracles describe games positively: they are a *ponos* or toil which is ‘worthy of athletes’ and give its victors ‘profit and glory’ (1026-7, 1033). The third relevant feature of the genre is its imagery. The tragic poets employed this well known activity to describe other things which were

199 Chapter 1.
200 For tragedy’s representation of heroes also as moral paradigms, see, for example, Hall 1997; Pritchard 1999a: 27-44. For their use in a comparable ways in letter schools, see chapter 2.
201 Larmour 1999: 63.
difficult to grasp in their own terms and even as a foil for measuring the wrongheadedness or madness of protagonists. They could have only done so effectively if their audience had a positive view of athletics.

Athletics featured in tragedy more regularly as part of a metaphor or simile than as a pursuit of one hero or another. This was largely due to its particular subject matter: in their dramatisations of mythology the tragic poets focussed on the ebb and flow of individual fortunes, dangerous collective ventures, homicidal family conflicts, ethical quandaries and other difficult topics. Because such things were not easy to narrate, they usually relied on pre-existing metaphors or invented new ones which were based on better known or simpler phenomena. That is to say, these complex and unassimilable experiences are defined and explained in terms of an activity which is familiar to all.

In light of the detailed knowledge which theatre goers had of athletics the tragic poets’ basing of so many metaphors on this activity is not surprising.

For such figures of speech the tragedians drew more on wrestling and running than the other standard events of athletics (e.g. Aesch. Ag. 1205; Soph. OT 879-81). Old comedy employed wrestling primarily to articulate its verbal agōnes (see part 3.4 above). Although Sophocles did once describe a persuasive speaker as similar to ‘a skillful wrestler’ (Phil. 429-30), tragedy usually associated this event with quite different activities. Because the classical Athenians conceived of battle and sporting bouts or races as agōnes which required the same virtues of their respective participants, the tragic poets found it easy to describe the clash of land armies in the language of athletics (e.g. Eur. Supp. 314-15). As a consequence they could describe hoplites, for example, as ‘wrestlers with shield’ (e.g. Soph. fr. 859 Snell, Kannicht and Radt; cf. Eur. Rhes. 498-509), an opposing army as deinos palaistēs or a clever wrestler (Eur. Supp. 703-4) and battle itself as ‘wrestling of the spear’ (Heracl. 158-60).

By extension the military aid which one city pledges to give another could be called a palaisma or wrestler’s trick (Aesch. Eum. 775-7; cf. Eur. Hipp. 815). Since human challenges more generally were also imagined as wrestling bouts (e.g. Aesch. Ag. 63-4; Eur. Supp. 550-1), tragic heroes consistently drew on this event to articulate the challenges before them, describing unforeseen events, fortune, old age and other vicissitudes as duspalaistos or difficult to wrestle with.

In view of the good general knowledge which their audience had of the different agōnes in running the tragic poets were also able to draw on the specifics of each footrace-type to create a wide range of metaphors (e.g. Eur. Alc. 486-9; El. 824-6; HF 202 Seafaring provides an excellent example of this figurative inventiveness of the tragic poets (Pritchard 1999a: 163-82).

Larmour 1999: 94.


For the cultural overlap between these two types of contests, see chapter 5.

Because of their battles with each other, the gods too could be described as wrestlers (e.g. Aesch. PV 165, 960-1).

E.g. Aesch. Ag. 692-3; Supp. 468-9; Eur. Alc. 889; Supp. 1108; Soph. fr. 924 Snell, Kannicht and Radt.
655-4). Thus in one play Aeschylus can have a character introduce the dolikhos or long-distance race to emphasise the length of his journey (PV 284-5), while in his Agamemnon, by contrast, Clytaemestra employs the popular torch races of classical Athens as a metaphor of the signal fires which have brought the news of her husband’s military victory over the Trojans (312-14). Later in the same speech Clytaemestra takes up the diaulos, in which runners ran two lengths of the stadium, to describe the new danger which Agamemnon’s soldiers face: in spite of its victory the army must avoid the temptation of sacking Troy’s sanctuaries, which would anger the gods, because they will need divine aid for the second leg of their agōn, namely the perilous sea journey home (338-44; cf. Eur. Tro. 435). In Electra Euripides gives her daughter a very similar metaphor as she commits hubris against Aegisthus’ corpse (953-6). ‘So do not’, she boasts, ‘let any villain think, if he runs his first leg well, that he defeats Justice, until he nears the finishing line and turns life’s end!’ The audiences of these last two plays knew that Agamemnon’s army would be destroyed at sea and that Electra and her brother would fail to heed her own warning. Thus these metaphors are examples of dramatic irony and so point to the tragic poets’ use of athletic figures of speech for more than simple descriptions (e.g. Eur. Bacch. 974-6).

Indeed tragedy drew on athletics to represent figuratively the disastrous misperceptions of its characters. This can be seen very clearly when tragedy conveys the madness which a deity has inflicted by making a character believe erroneously that he or she is an athletic competitor (e.g. Eur. HF 957-62). In the Bacchae of Euripides, for example, Agave, along with Thebes’ other women, tear apart with their bare hands her son, whom they believe, in the mad state in which Dionysus has put them, to be a wild animal. Thus, as Agave stumbles back into the polis, brandishing the severed head of Pentheus, she repeatedly addresses the god as her fellow hunter and hō kallinikos or the glorious victor (1144-7; cf. 974-6, 1200-1). Like nikēphoros (‘victory-bearing’), this second description was used to hail Panhellenic victors, whom the classical Athenians considered to be civic benefactors of the highest order (see part 3.1 above). Thus Agave’s misrecognition of her murder of kin as a sporting victory helps to make plain her temporary insanity and provides an unambiguous point of comparison for adjudicating what she has done.

Aeschylus used athletics extensively for dramatic irony in his Oresteia of 458. This trilogy is widely recognised as ‘a profound meditation on the perilous logic of nikē’ in which family-members’ serial misrecognition of each other as the same as enemies of the polis facilitates the destruction of a royal house. As a result of this faulty thinking, they interpret their acts of revenge against each other as part of legitimate rule-bound agōnes and hence fail to appreciate, before too late, how

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209 For the contemporary use of these terms to describe Panhellenic victory, see Arnott 1981: 188; Golden 1998: 101-2.
unethical their homicides happen to be (e.g. Aesch. Cho. 891-2). Among the metaphors which Aeschylus utilised to express this destructive outlook were athletic ones: the characters and choruses of the Oresteia constantly introduced such figures of speech to describe truly reprehensible deeds.\footnote{Larmour 1999: 119-33.} Indeed the prominence of such imagery in this trilogy probably explains why subsequent tragic adaptations of this myth drew so heavily on the world of athletes.\footnote{Golden 1998: 98-9.} Thus Clytaemestra, when she has hacked to death her husband, calls this act a long-contemplated ‘agōn’ (Aesch. Ag. 1337-8) and gives an account of it which is ‘a grotesque parody of a wrestling contest’ (1379-88).\footnote{Larmour 1999: 125.} This murder is described with the same metaphor in Libation Bearers (498-9, 866-8). Although Clytaemestra exults, as Cassandra earlier foresaw, as if she had routed an army ‘in battle’ (1235-7), hers is no victory in a military or sporting agōn: it is a morally repugnant killing of a family-member, which is part of her ‘truceless war’ against her own philoi (1235-6; cf. Cho. 991-4).

In the trilogy’s second play Clytaemestra’s children are likewise locked into seeing their relations with her as an agōn. In planning their slaughter of her they repeatedly pray for ‘nikē’ in ‘this danger’ (e.g. 146-7, 270), while Orestes asks his deceased father to give him ‘the same holds’ in which he was held, if he wants nikē in turn after his defeat (497-9). The chorus develops this last metaphor in their own prayer (866-8): ‘In such a wrestling-bout godlike Orestes, who sat out the previous contest, is about to engage alone with two opponents. May it be for victory.’ Orestes’ killing of his mother was once again very different to an athletic competition. Euripides for one described the murder of a close relative as ‘a very disgraceful crown’ (Phoen. 1364-71; cf. El. 1190-1205, 1224-6) and that of Orestes as ‘mother-killing agōnes’ (Tro. 363). Orestes realises too late the immorality of his deed, for it is only as he is forced into exile that he understands how ‘this nikē’ has brought him ‘unenviable pollution’ (Aesch. Cho. 1017).

Euripides certainly grasped the important function of sporting imagery in the Oresteia. Around forty years after its first performance he took over this use of athletics by his predecessor in his own version of the revenge of Agamemnon’s children.\footnote{The Electra of Euripides has been variously dated between 422 and 413 (Cropp 1988: l-li).} Nonetheless his Electra differed from the trilogy’s second play in its focus on the destructive psychology of its eponymous heroine. Euripides dramatised how the strong desire of Electra for revenge for her father and the unexpected life of poverty which his murderers had inflicted on her drove her to be excessively angry. As a consequence of this thumos (1118, 1182-4), this young woman fails to see the immorality of matricide and hence hounds her brother, who grasps its repugnancy at the last minute, to carry through with this murder. In spite of this changed focus Euripides brought to the fore key features of Libation Bearers.\footnote{Cropp 1988: xlvi-l.} His play emphasises more than Aeschylus’ how the royal house’s new generation repeats the
errors of the previous one: Electra, for example, commits *hubris* against the body of Aegisthus as he apparently did against Agamemnon’s grave (326-31, 895-956), is driven to matricide by the same excessive anger which drove Clytaemestra to slay her husband (1061, 1105-10, 1117-18, 1183-4, 1201-5) and, like her, plans, and takes part in, a family homicide (279, 646-67, 967-84, 1160, 1224-6).216 Likewise, Euripides makes the two siblings repeatedly refer to their showdown with Clytaemestra and Aegisthus as an *agón* (e.g. 697-8, 751, 762, 889, 987), imagine them to be enemies whom one meets on the battlefield (670-1, 884; cf. 833) and pray for *nikē* over them (674-5). Euripides, finally, followed Aeschylus in having his protagonists employ athletic figures of speech to express this disastrously one-sided view of family relations.217 Orestes confirms that he has returned for the ‘crown’ of killing his mother and her second husband (613-14). Electra describes his impending slaughter of Aegisthus as a wrestling bout (685-7) and, once he has done so, welcomes him and his companion back as if they were Panhellenic victors (866-72, 880-9).

Yet Euripides went beyond Aeschylus in having Electra and Orestes voice criticisms of athletics. His reason for doing so was similar to the one for making them use athletic metaphors in the first place: it emphasised that these siblings were incapable of thinking through the ethically complex scenarios which they faced. In spite of the apparent anachronism Euripides implies that Electra and Orestes have been educated by the sophists.218 Lower-class citizens were concerned of course that these intellectuals for hire were leading upper-class youths to unethical behaviour by teaching them to make the so-called weaker argument stronger and to call into question traditional religion (see part 3.3 above). As a playwright Euripides exploited this popular anxiety for characterisation: he regularly marked the reasoning of characters as questionable by making them sound as if they were students of the sophists.219 Thus in portraying the protagonists of his *Electra*, whose youth he variously emphasised, as recipients of the ‘new education’ Euripides efficiently flagged to his audience how their morality was suspect and integrated into his drama an issue of popular concern.220 In his plays such portrayals were effected by characters rehearsing one or more recognisable aspects of what the sophists taught. A very good example is the scene of *Electra* in which the eponymous heroine and the Old Man debate whether the items which he has found at Agamemnon’s grave prove that her brother has returned from exile (518-44); for Electra convinces him that they do not with the aid of several techniques which Antiphon and Aristotle describe in their respective treatises on anti-logical argumentation.221 That she is immediately shown up as completely wrong, when the Old Man identifies the stranger who is

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220 For their youth, see Cropp 1988: xxxiv-vi with primary sources.
221 Gallagher 2003: 405-8.
already present as Orestes (558-75), simply confirms her lack of sound judgement. In other scenes Euripides implies the ethical corruption of the siblings by having them express the standard criticisms which these teachers of higher education regularly made of athletics.

Orestes reveals his own exposure to the sophists in his speech before his identity is confirmed (367-90). This long aside on the difficulty of measuring an individual’s morality follows this character’s evident surprise at the sōphrosunē of the Farmer (53, 261), who has been given Electra as a wife (34-5), as well as his offer of hospitality. This lower-class citizen has not slept with Electra, out of deference to her higher social standing, and insists on showing xenia towards the disguised Orestes and Pylades in spite of his manifest poverty (43-6, 247-62, 357-63). Editors have regularly expressed doubt about whether such a display of basic social norms would have justified such a long and apparently irrelevant speech and so have bracketed more or less of it as interpolation. But Simon Goldhill has argued persuasively for its authenticity on the grounds that it plays an important role in its speaker’s characterisation and develops the theme of morality’s relationship to social class, which was introduced at the play’s outset (e.g. 39-42, 236, 253, 267, 361-2).

Orestes opens his speech by asking how anyone can justly ‘distinguish’ morality when there is no ‘accuracy’ with regard to euandria and confusion in the ‘natures’ of mortals (367-8, 373). Goldhill points out that this topic as well as the terminology which Orestes uses appropriate contemporary debates of the sophists. The justification which he gives for claiming this uncertainty employs too the structures of parallelism and reversal which were made famous by Gorgias: he has seen a useless man born of a good father but good children from bad parents and thoughtlessness in a rich man but sound thinking in a poor one (369-72). Orestes develops his case by dismissing one after the other wealth, poverty and battlefield performance as reliable indicators of morality (373-9). This conveying of apparent thoroughness by refuting a range of possibilities was recognised as another technique of anti-logical argumentation. As the Farmer, who is not upper class, has been discovered to be ‘very good’, Orestes argues that an individual’s character and private life should be instead the measures of morality (379-85). He draws his speech to a close with an admonition (386-90):

Men of this kind also manage cities and households well. But bodies empty of thoughts are statues of the marketplace, as the strong arm does not await the spear more than the weak. This lies instead in temperament and good character.

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225 Goldhill 1986a: 228, 239-42.
226 Solmsen 1975: 10-46.
Editors have doubted especially the authenticity of this unprovoked attack on athletes and even Goldhill struggles to explain its relevancy. It takes up, of course, Tyrtaeus’ valuing of the aretē of the soldier over the sportsman’s and the complaint of Xenophanes that wise men give much more to the city than Panhellenic victors (see part 3.3 above). Euripides included these last lines as it was the intellectuals who were known in classical Athenians to rehearse such criticisms. Thus by repeating them – especially without an apparent reason – Orestes gives a final confirmation of his spending too much time in the corrupting presence of the sophists.

Euripides combined his two different uses of athletics for characterisation in a subsequent scene in which Electra welcomes back her brother after he has slaughtered Aegisthus. Like the chorus, she treats him and Pylades as if they were Panhellenic victors in an eiselasis or welcoming home ceremony (see part 3.1 above). She hails him with kallinikos and nikēphoros and affixes crowns and adornments to his head and that of his comrade (761, 862-5, 870-2, 880-9). Her reception serves as ‘an ironic counterpoint to reality’. The Messenger has already made clear that Orestes murdered Aegisthus at a sacrifice to the Nymphs after his victim had invited him and Pylades into his home as xenoi or guests (774-859). The classical Athenians were normally unsettled at violence during a religious ritual, even if they did not denounce every perpetrator of it, and saw the murder of a guest or host as the breaking of customs which Zeus Xenios, the divine patron of guest friendship, demanded (e.g. Ar. Ran. 145-51, Eur. Cyc. 285-312).

Thus Electra’s patently inappropriate use of Panhellenic victory as a metaphor reveals once again her questionable ethical judgement and doubles up as a clear reference-point for assessing what Orestes has done. The negative impression of her is reinforced when she justifies her garlanding of her brother on the grounds that as the son of the victorious military leader at Troy he has not run a ‘useless’ stadion but killed their polemios, who had killed their father (880-5). This rehearses again the criticisms of athletics which the sophists had taken over from archaic poets. By having Electra air them Euripides associated her manifestly poor judgement to the lessons of the sophists. He also readied his audience for the critical scene in which she employed their anti-logical argumentation to convince her brother to continue with the ‘agōnisma’ of their matricide in spite of his very well founded second thoughts (966-87).

3.6. Popular criticism of other elite activities

There were of course other activities in classical Athens, such as the drinking party, political leadership, pederastic homosexuality and horsemanship, which were

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230 With Cropp 1988: 159.
also exclusive preserves of the wealthy.\textsuperscript{232} However, these upper-class pursuits differed from athletics in one critical respect: they were regularly criticised directly in old comedy and the other genres of popular literature. Poor Athenians may have hoped to enjoy, one day, the lifestyle of the rich, but they still had problems with their class-marked pursuits, frequently associating them with stereotypical misdeeds of this social stratum. Wealthy citizens, for example, were criticised for their excessive enjoyment of two staples of the \textit{sumposion} or drinking party: alcohol and prostitutes.\textsuperscript{233} As far as the Athenian \textit{dēmos} were concerned, intoxicated symposiasts were prone to commit \textit{hubris} or physical or verbal assault (e.g. \textit{Vesp.} 1251-67, 1299-303) – a crime which was considered to be typical of wealthy citizens.\textsuperscript{234} In addition, they believed expenditure on a drinking party, like spending on other elite activities, came at the expense of a wealthy citizen’s ability to pay for festival and military liturgies, such as the chorus sponsorship and the trierarchy.\textsuperscript{235} We have already seen that the Athenian \textit{dēmos} expected their political leaders to be wealthy and well educated (see part 3.4 above). At the same time they also had very negative views of politicians, suspecting them of taking bribes and embezzling state funds (e.g. \textit{Ar. Eq.} 716-18, 779-80, 801-4; \textit{Lys.} 21.12-13; 27.6-8) and of trying to deceive their audiences through manipulative oratory (e.g. \textit{Ar. Eq.} 650-724; \textit{Lys.} 27.6; \textit{Dem.} 35.40-2).\textsuperscript{236}

The arrival of democracy in Athens of the late sixth century may not have discouraged wealthy citizens from pursing pederasty, but it did give their poor fellow citizens the opportunity over time to change the assessment of it in public discourse. The archaic poets had treated this mannered form of homosexuality positively as part of the normative lifestyle of their upper-class audiences.\textsuperscript{237} The \textit{dēmos} of classical Athens apparently never ended up condemning this activity outright and may even have seen it as an aspect of the good life which they longed to enjoy one day. Otherwise it is hard to explain why politicians occasionally mined this pursuit for metaphors to describe political behaviours which they viewed as positive (e.g. \textit{Ar. Eq.} 730-40; \textit{Thuc.} 2.43.1). Some individuals even felt it possible, in a law-court, to defend their own pursuit of a boy on the grounds that theirs was a ‘just erōs’ (Aeschin. 1.136), which strengthened the \textit{sōphrosunē} of their beloved as well as being chaste and sanctioned by the pederasty of the Tyrannicides and mythical heroes (e.g. 1.132-57). Clearly, however, the judgement which lower-class Athenians made

\textsuperscript{232} For horse-ownership and cavalry service as upper-class pursuits, see Bugh 1988: 29; Donlan 1980: 164-6; Spence 1993: 191-3 – all with ancient references. For pederasty as an elite preserve, see J. N. Davidson 2007: 421-2; Donlan 1980: 194-6, 208-9; Dover 1989: 150-1; Hubbard 1998.

\textsuperscript{233} For alcohol and upper-class citizens, see, for example, \textit{Ar. Eq.} 92-4; \textit{Vesp.} 79-80; \textit{Av.} 285-6; \textit{Ran.} 715, 739-40. For their excessive enjoyment of prostitutes, see, for example, Aeschin. 1.42; \textit{Ar. Eccl.} 242-4; \textit{Dem.} 36.45. Sommerstein 1996: 330-1.

\textsuperscript{234} For \textit{hubris} as typical of the upper class, see, for example, Roisman 2005: 92-4.


\textsuperscript{236} Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{237} Hubbard 2003a: 21-54.
of this time-honoured activity was largely negative, as public speakers, along with the comic and the tragic poets, more often than not depicted boy-love as a source of anxiety, associated it with stereotypical vices of the upper class, and misrepresented the relationship of an *erastēs* with his *erōmenos* as the same as the one between a customer and a male prostitute.\(^{238}\)

The citizens of classical Athens protected their young male relatives as best as they could from the *erōs* of admirers. As many, it seems, doubted the defence which pederasts offered of their affections as chaste (e.g. Amphis fr. 15 Kassel and Austin), Athenian fathers actually kept watch against men who, they suspected, wished to interfere with their sons physically (figure 3.2).\(^{239}\) Euripides appears to have dramatised their worst fears about what might happen if they let their guard down in his *Chrysippus*; for in this lost play Laius, whom Euripides portrays as Greece’s first *erastēs*, begins a friendship with the juvenile eponymous hero ostensibly for the sake of his education, but ends up raping him.\(^{240}\) This act of *hubris* pushes Chrysippus to suicide. In view of such popular anxiety the classical Athenians understandably tried to separate *paides* and even *meirakia* from actual or would-be lovers.\(^{241}\) Thus they regulated the opening hours of schools (Aeschin. 1.10-11), segregated different age-groups in the classes of the *paidotribai* (e.g. Pl. Lys. 203a-b, 206d), and required *khorēgoi* of boys-choruses and, after 336/5, even the supervisors of the eighteen- and nineteen-year-old ephebes to be over forty years (Aeschin. 1.11; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42.2), as men of this age were thought to have enough self-control to check any feelings of *erōs* for those in their care (Aeschin. 1.11).

Insert figure 3.2 here. Probably 2 thirds of a page in size.

Figure 3.2: Within a *palaistra* a sexually aroused athletics-teacher has set aside his staff so that he can manhandle one of the *paides* whom he has been instructing. Attic red-figure kylix, c. 480 BC, attributed to the Brygos Painter. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. no. 1967.304.

Lower-class Athenians likened the pursuing of boys to the drinking party, the hiring of courtesans and the other standard activities on which, they believed, upper-class youths regularly wasted their inheritances.\(^{242}\) They seem, finally, to have been ever ready to reduce this form of homosexuality beyond their reach to male prostitution. In *Wealth*, for example, Aristophanes characterised the love-gifts which *erastai* regularly offered *erōmenoi* as payments for services rendered: while boy prostitutes, two of his characters agree, ask for money, upper-class *paides* are ashamed to do so and request instead hunting dogs or other expensive gifts (149-59). In the same vein Aeschines alleged in a law-court speech that a political opponent of his had prostituted himself, when he was a *meirakion*, as he had let lovers pay for his


\(^{240}\) Hubbard 2000: 8; 2006 with testimonia.


fine dining, whoring and other wasteful activities in exchange for sexual favours (1.75-6; cf. Ephippus fr. 20 Kassel and Austin).\textsuperscript{243} This easy misconstruing of upper-class homosexuality as prostitution could be very dangerous for public speakers, as they could be prosecuted for having prostituted themselves and, if convicted, as some certainly were (Dem. 19.287), would lose their rights to address the dēmos and to hold a magistracy or priesthood (e.g. Aeschin. 1.19-20, 29; Dem. 22.24, 29-30).\textsuperscript{244} In view of the very negative associations which pederasty had in the public discourse of the Athenian democracy, practitioners of it unsurprisingly feared public ridicule (Lys. 3.3-4, 9), while politicians and litigants sought to blacken the character of their opponent in the eyes of their predominantly lower-class audiences by accusing them of once having been homosexuals or male prostitutes.\textsuperscript{245}

Athenian popular culture also entertained contradictory views of the elite’s fondness for chariot racing and horse ownership and their military service as members of the city’s cavalry corps. In recognition of his victory with a four-horse chariot at the Olympics of 416 (Thuc. 6.16.2), the democracy would have awarded Alcibiades two of its highest honours: life-long grants of sitēsis and proedria (see part 3.1 above). However, the subsequent public debate about his victory and his unprecedented efforts to achieve it consistently returned to the criticism that chariot racing was a waste of a practitioner’s private resources (e.g. Thuc. 6.6.1-3, 12.2, 15.3). \textit{Clouds} by Aristophanes confirms this to be a popular anxiety about equestrian competition; for its hero only turns to the ‘new education’ in a desperate attempt to escape the huge debts which he has incurred in supporting his son’s passion for racing chariots (e.g. 12-24; cf. Aesch. \textit{PV} 465-6; Xen. \textit{Eq. mag.} 1.10-11). Forensic orators of the fourth century made a similar criticism of the private use of horses.\textsuperscript{246}

For example, Demosthenes accuses Phaenippus of selling his war horse, clearly something of value to the city, to help finance a chariot for his private benefit alone (42.24; cf. 18.320, 22.75-7). In his speech against Meidias he presents his opponent’s private enjoyment of a chariot as another feature of his luxurious and conspicuous lifestyle, which provided no benefit to the community (Dem. 21.158-9).

The Athenian dēmos judged the cavalry-corps to be of real value to the city, welcomed positive depictions of it in speeches, plays and public art, and directed very large amounts of public money to its maintenance.\textsuperscript{247} For example, the chorus of Sophocles’ \textit{Oedipus at Colonus} praises Athenian horsemanship and naval expertise as a gift of Poseidon and ‘a very great boast’ (707-19), which they put on a par with the city’s olive trees (694-705). In more prosaic terms admittedly, Athenian public speakers of the fourth century present the cavalry as ‘an important state asset’ and an ‘indispensable’ part of its armed forces.\textsuperscript{248} The cavalry-corps is also given a

\textsuperscript{243} Hubbard 2003a: 119.
\textsuperscript{244} Hubbard 1998: 65; 2000: 9; 2003a: 119.
\textsuperscript{245} E.g. Aeschin. 1.19-20, 29, 131; 3.162; Andoc. 1.100-1; Dem. 22.24, 29, 58; 19.287.
\textsuperscript{246} Ober 1989: 206-7; Pritchard 1999a: 59-60; Spence 1993: 225.
\textsuperscript{247} For the popular perceptions of Athenian cavalrymen, see Christ 2006: 117, 57-8; Low 2002; Pritchard 1998a: 50; 1999a: 110-15; and especially Spence 1993: 202-29; 2010.
\textsuperscript{248} Spence 1993: 225-6 with primary sources.
prominent place on the Acropolis where two streams of youthful cavalrymen, organised into their ten tribal units (e.g. Lys. 15.5; Xen. Eq. mag. 2.2), fill most of the Parthenon frieze. The democracy heavily subsidised the participation of young upper-class citizens in this corps by providing each horseman with a *katastasis* or setting-up loan to purchase his war-horse (e.g. Eupolis fr. 293 Kassel and Austin), along with a *misthos* or daily wage to cover, among other things, the grain for his and his groom’s mounts (e.g. Ath. Pol. 49.1; IG I3 138.4, 9; 378.4, 8-9, 11-12, 24). The city spent nearly 40 talents on the pay for this corps alone in the mid-fourth century (Xen. Eq. mag. 1.19) and most probably more than three times as much on it during most of the Peloponnesian War.

In spite of this manifestly positive view of the cavalry-corps, service as a horseman did not escape the direct criticism to which other equestrian activities were subjected in the public discourse of the democracy. The most trenchant example of this negative depiction comes from the three speeches of Lysias (14, 15 and 16), which focus on the behaviour of some wealthy soldiers in the Haliartus campaign of 395/4. These repeatedly evaluate cavalry service as much safer than hoplite service and suggest that an individual’s preference for the former over the later, even if he is a registered member of the cavalry, is motivated by cowardice (e.g. 14.7, 11-12, 14-15; 16.13). Polly Low and Iain Spence have put this strident attack against the morality of horsemen down to the particular opprobrium in which the cavalry found themselves during the early fourth century, because of the crimes that they had committed as part of Athenian oligarchy immediately after the Peloponnesian War. However, while the Athenian people were certainly extremely hostile towards the cavalry at this time (e.g. Xen. Hell. 3.1.4), criticisms of their military morality appear to have been much more longstanding elements of popular culture than Low and Spence suggest. Horseman normally fought at some distance from the enemy by hurling their javelins towards them and retreating when they came too close (e.g. Xen. Eq. 12.13). As a consequence, their way of fighting was the antithesis of the hand-to-hand fighting of the hoplite phalanx. Because the city’s definition of gallantry was based on the practical requirements of hoplite combat, Athenian horsemen, then, were always vulnerable to the kinds of criticisms which we find in Lysias.

What literary evidence survives suggests such criticisms were made regularly. For example, Demosthenes presented horsemen and lightly armed soldiers as morally inferior to hoplites in a speech of 341 in which he criticised Philip of Macedon’s military innovations (9.49). At this juncture, as Spence concedes, the cavalry’s crimes

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255 Spence 1993: 34-163.
256 For the hoplite-based definition of courage, see chapter 5.
under the Thirty had long been forgotten by ordinary Athenians. In a dialogue of the early fourth century Plato acknowledged how cavalry service was safer than fighting as a hoplite (Symp. 220d-1a). As his students and hometown readers were current or former members of the cavalry, Plato presumably would have avoided any endorsement of the prevailing popular hostility towards the corps. This suggests that a cavalryman’s relative safety was probably a commonly made observation. Before 395/4 an Athenian law was already on the books prohibiting a citizen from serving as a horseman, if he was not formally a part of the cavalry corps (Lys. 14.8; 15.11; 16.13), which presupposes a pre-existing popular concern about wealthy citizens shirking their duty in just this manner.

Low and Spence have overlooked how Knights by Aristophanes actually pushes this popular concern back to the 420s. When he finally escapes, for example, the political trickery of Paphlagon, Demos rediscovers his deliberative capacities (1329-65) and proposes a number of improvements to public life (1366-408). One of these concerns wealthy hoplites (1369-71; cf. Pax 1179-88): ‘Next no hoplite when already entered into a campaign list (en katalogōi) shall be placed on another through political connections (kata spoudas) but shall remain registered where he was initially.’ In 423, when this comedy was first produced, the tribal commander of each hoplite or cavalry unit conscripted members of his tribe for service in an upcoming campaign and included their names on a publicly displayed katalogos or campaign list (e.g. Lys. 15.16; 16.6-8, 13). As hoplites and cavalrymen alone were recruited thus and ‘political connections’ were largely the preserve of upper-class citizens, Demos’ proposal concerns the sort of behaviour which occurred before the battle of Haliartus: the unauthorised service of wealthy citizens as cavalrymen instead of hoplites. Like Lysias, Aristophanes seems to put this misbehaviour down to cowardice; for the Sausage Seller suggests the old man’s proposal will discomfit the shield-throwing Cleonymus (Eq. 1372), a politician whom the poet repeatedly slandered as a coward who had run away from a hoplite battle. Cavalry service, then, serves as a clear point of comparison to the democracy’s treatment of athletics. Both were publicly subsidised by the democracy and favourably assessed in its popular culture. But of these two activities only cavalry service attracted regular and substantive criticism in the democracy’s public discourse.

3.7. Conclusion: the anomaly of elite sport in democratic Athens

Athletics appears to be an anomaly of the Athenian democracy. In spite of being an elite preserve it was highly valued and practically supported and escaped the...
mixed and regularly negative judgement which other elite activities faced in public discourse. Non-elite Athenians judged sporting education and competition to be overwhelmingly positive pursuits, associated these two sides of athletics with justice, important personal virtues and the public good, and took a keen interest in the careers of contemporary athletes and sports-history. As they predominated in the political and legal organs of the democracy, they could translate their high estimation of athletics into public policy. Thus in its first fifty years the democracy developed an unrivalled program of competitive festivals. Athletics featured in two thirds of these fifteen heortai and was much more common than the other types of festival-based agônes. The Athenian dêmos raised around one hundred talents of public and private money annually to pay for its polis-level festivals. This staggering figure was comparable to the yearly running costs of the government itself. The democracy too developed its public facilities for athletic education and competition and managed carefully the privately owned wrestling schools. As the classical Athenians, finally, viewed fellow citizens who had been victorious at the Olympics or another panêguris as civic benefactors of the first order, they rewarded them with some of the democracy’s highest public honours.

The most striking aspect of this democratic support for athletics was the lack of public criticism. Poor Athenians had negative views of the wealthy and normally welcomed unflattering treatments of their preserves on stage or in public speeches. The representing of athletics in the same negative light would have been very straightforward. Criticisms of this upper-class activity predated the democracy. Xenophanes had complained that wise men were more deserving of public honours than Olympic victors, while Tyrtaeus had placed military above sporting aretê. In classical Athens the sophists repeated these negative judgements in their prose writings and classes for wealthy meirakia. Because playwrights and public speakers read widely and, as upper-class citizens, had access to higher education, they clearly had criticisms of athletics ready at hand. Since athletic venues were closely associated with pederasty in Athenian popular culture, they also could have just as easily exploited the overwhelmingly negative view which lower-class citizens had of this mannered form of homosexuality to call into question the standing of athletics. That they did not take up these opportunities for extending the criticism of the upper class and its conspicuous pursuits bears witness to the high regard which the Athenian dêmos had of athletics. By bitter experience elite performers had discovered that although their mass audiences might accept jokes about, for example, athletes’ eating-habits and derisive comments on the erôs which aristocrats might develop for them, they took a very dim view of anybody who criticised this activity directly. Clearly they felt the same way about those who attacked its practitioners, as athlêtai were the only group of high-profile citizens whom the comic poets did not dare to ridicule on stage.

This chapter identifies three causes for aspects of this democratic support of victors and contests. The dêmos rewarded Panhellenic victors very generously, because, firstly, they had raised the standing of Athens on their own initiative and without public funding. Lower-class citizens presumably welcomed proposals for
new festivals, including competitive ones, because, secondly, of the happiness and respite from toils which they would bring them and because, thirdly, they believed that *heortai* encouraged their objects of worship to maintain their *kharis* towards the city. None of these causes, however, appears to explain athletics under the Athenian democracy. For the classical Athenians athletics consisted of far more than the circuit of the Panhellenic games.\(^{262}\) It included a large number of local *agônes* and the classes of the *paidotribêς* and in terms of overall participants was more of an educational than a competitive activity. The necessity of athletic education for credible Panhellenic performance was recognised.\(^{263}\) Still it is hard to see how the very few victories of Athenian athletes on the national level would have prompted the *dêmos* to treat athletics as favourably as they did. Individual politicians, by contrast, were rewarded *sitêsis* and *proedria* for outstanding public services, but this did not save political leaders as a class from savage public criticism.

More telling is that the democracy honoured those of its citizens who had secured a Panhellenic victory in an athletic or equestrian event and that it introduced both types of *agônes* into its festival program. If these three causes, then, were responsible for this anomaly, predictable results are that the *dêmos* would have viewed horse- and chariot-racing as positively as they did athletics, showed it a comparable preference in the expansion of their competitive festivals and likewise shielded it from critical comments in public discourse. That they clearly did not act in any of these ways indicates that the explanation of this anomaly lies beyond this chapter’s scope. Subsequent chapters will show that the major reason for the unusual standing of Athenian athletics was the close relationship between this upper-class activity and the new style of warfare which the democracy developed and waged. Before turning in this direction, however, we should first consider closely the unusual prominence of athletics in satyric drama; for this genre’s regular depiction of satyrs practising athletics badly and its rehearsing of negative comments about athletes sit uneasily with one of this chapter’s core findings, namely that the Athenian *dêmos* abhorred criticism of this upper-class activity and its practitioners in popular literature.

\(^{262}\) Chapter 2.
\(^{263}\) Chapter 2.