

## REVIEW ARTICLES

### Periclean Athens

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Lorel J. Samons II (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Pericles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xx + 343 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-00389-6 (paperback); 978-0-521-80793-7 (hardback).

This companion to the age of Pericles, dated roughly 450-428 B.C., brings together eleven articles by a distinguished gallery of specialists, its declared aim being ‘to provoke as much as to inform, to stimulate the reader to further inquiry rather than to put matters to rest’ (xvii). Even though these specialists do not always see eye to eye in their judgments, their discord does not normally surface in the essays, and the end result is a coherent overview of Athenian society which succeeds in illuminating an important chapter of Greek history. This evaluation does not however apply to the book’s ‘Introduction’ and especially not to its ‘Conclusion’ (‘Pericles and Athens’), written by the editor himself. Here Samons, rather than weaving the individual contributions into a general conclusion, restates assessments of Athenian democracy that he has published elsewhere (see 23 n. 73). These are often at odds with most previous evaluations of Periclean Athens and read more like exhortations to praiseworthy behavior than historical analyses. In this review article I will comment briefly on the eleven chapters and then return to Samons’ views, my more general theme being the issue of historical judgment.

Reminding us that democracy and empire often appear as irreconcilable opposites to the modern mind, Peter Rhodes in his dense, but remarkably lucid Chapter 1 (‘Democracy and Empire’) addresses the question of the relationship between Athens’ democracy and fifth-century empire. He proposes to approach the issue in the spirit of Finley’s dictum ‘Athenian imperialism employed all the forms of material exploitation that were available and possible in that society’, qualified by a caveat: ‘We must acknowledge that other societies can act, and have acted, *in good faith* in moral terms other than ours, even abhorrent to us. Historical explanation is not identical with moral judgment’ (25, the italics are Finley’s).

The transformation of Athens from a modest democratic city-state in 483 B.C. into the head of the greatest empire of the Greek world about thirty years later was due not to a premeditated imperialistic program but rather to an interplay of factors such as good luck (the discovery of the silver mines), the vigor and the foresight of the new democracy (the decision to build 200 ships), and contingency (Pausanias’ unpopularity with the

allies). From the period when Cimon was the Athenian commander, however, Rhodes detects a new kind of imperialistic mentality taking hold of the Athenians, as exemplified by the treatment meted out to Eion, Scyros, Carystus, Naxos, and Thasos, and the transfer of the League treasury to Athens. The fully-fledged, mid-fifth century imperialism (characterized by measures such as the establishment of democracies in allied states and the transfer of lawsuits from local to Athenian courts) coincided with the beginnings of the fully-fledged Athenian democracy, which saw an unprecedented growth in the political power of the masses.

In this democracy, the high degree of citizen involvement was only possible because of the exclusion of numerous metics and slaves. But whereas the gap between metics or slaves and citizens was unbridgeable, the gap between rich and poor citizens was clearly not: true, the Athenians did not abolish the advantages of wealth, but they moderated the gulf between rich and poor by introducing ‘modest payments for performing the various civilian duties of a citizen’ (29), and, I should add, by exempting the lower classes from direct taxation through the imposition of liturgies on the rich. The empire too was instrumental in the advancement of democracy, helping as it did to generate more business, to finance more officials, and to pay for the performance of civilian duties. The income from tribute enabled Athens to pay indirectly for projects which the state otherwise might not have been able to afford, such as the buildings on the Acropolis and elsewhere. The rise in the standard of living and democratization did not create a rift between the poorer citizens, the *thētes*, and the hoplites, as all stood to gain from the transfer of powers from the Areopagus to more representative bodies.

‘There is no sign that anybody in Athens disapproved of the empire or of the way in which Athens treated the allies’ (30), writes Rhodes, but I must demur, because Thucydides at least was critical, if not of empire as such than of the treatment meted out to recalcitrant cities: his frequent use of the term “enslaved” implies disapproval, and some speeches (especially 3.37) presuppose a forgiving attitude of at least part of the *dēmos* towards the subject states. On the other hand Rhodes is right in pointing out that the Greeks found no fault in a democracy ruling an empire; as, unlike us, they conceived of human affairs in terms of citizens’ rights, not human rights.

Rhodes counters some historians’ all-too-literal interpretation of Thucydides’ catchphrase that Periclean Athens was only ‘in theory democracy but in fact rule by the first man’ by pointing out that Pericles was no autocrat. To direct Athenian policy, he had to ensure that he would be elected, year after year, to the post of *stratēgos*, and that the Assembly would vote as he wanted, on proposal after proposal. Thanks to his charisma, the Assembly did vote from the 450s to the 430s as he wanted, justifying the view that the democratic imperialism which Athens was pursuing — policies which earned her the title of “tyrant city” — were Pericles’ policies. Rhodes concludes this chapter with a short survey of the aftermath of the Periclean age down to 321 B.C., the gist of which is ‘a change of atmosphere if not a fundamental change in the principles of the democracy’.

In Chapter 2 (‘Athenian religion in the age of Pericles’), Deborah Boedeker provides a useful and accurate overview of the major beliefs and practices of Athenian religion in the period under investigation, her leading theme being the right way to treat the gods. Following some general remarks concerning Athenian “religion” (it was polytheistic,

with no widely accepted dogmatic texts, no priestly class, no creed), Boedeker surveys the main Athenian gods, some local myths that ‘shaped and reflected Athens’s view of itself’ (47), the goddess Athena, who stood above all the rest, and the remarkable ease with which new gods were incorporated into the pantheon. In a sub-section on heroes, which includes, amongst others, Theseus, the Eponymous Heroes, Aglaurus, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and even the contemporary war dead, Boedeker beautifully illustrates the process by which the crude, ancient myths were “democratized” under the impact of the new democratic morality. The next sub-section, focusing on sanctuaries, sacrifices and festivals, describes the construction of temples, such as the Acropolis, built as homes for gods, the public rituals honoring the gods — consisting of animal sacrifices, libations, festivals, prayers and processions — as well as a bewildering array of bizarre activities, such as driving two human scapegoats out of the city at the Thargelia or collecting the remains of sacrificed piglets from the pits where they had decayed at the Thesmophoria. The largest and most spectacular festivities are then described, pride of place given to the Panathenaia.

In the sub-section on religion and democracy Boedeker states that ‘the Athenian state took its relationship to the gods very seriously’ (57) and provides a long list of practices to illustrate that view. To the mind of the present reviewer, the problem seems to be whether these practices amount indeed to deep religiosity or only supply a convenient façade to a collective mentality largely emancipated from the traditional hold of religion — a lip service that the enlightened elites might have paid to appease the masses. Judged by the standard of genuinely religious communities (such as existed, for example, in the European Middle Ages), and taking into account the lack of widely accepted dogmatic texts, a priestly class, or creed, as Boedeker initially pointed out, the second possibility seems more likely. This evaluation is corroborated to some extent by the fact that, unlike in the major monotheistic religions, individuals in Athens were free to seek the aid of gods and heroes privately (in Christianity, famously, there was no salvation outside the Church). As Boedeker points out, Athenian believers could even resort to magical practices to constrain the attention of would-be lovers or to harm enemies and rivals, their attempts not being subjected to social or even legal disapproval.

The last sub-section of Boedeker’s chapter, ‘Criticism of traditional religion’, points in the same direction. The intellectual ferment of Periclean Athens was underpinned by religious skepticism, the main promoters of which were Pericles’ associates, Anaxagoras, Protagoras and Prodicos. Presumably attracted to Athens because of the city’s reputation for tolerance, these critics were undeniably condemned at times for impiety, along with some Athenians, Socrates in particular. Boedeker, however, takes the view that most of the impiety trials reported in the sources may never have happened, which may bear out Athens’ reputation for tolerance. This is a comprehensive and balanced survey that provides the non-specialist reader with the essentials of Athenian religion.

Addressing the question of the “primitiveness” or “modernity” of the Athenian economy, Lisa Kallet in Chapter 3 (‘The Athenian Economy’) argues that the Athenians did in fact have an economic mentality, which was largely boosted by the developments of the fifth century, and that they engaged in a wide range of private and collective economic enterprises on a much greater scale than the “primitivists” used to think. The

fifth century was, in fact, pivotal in the development of economic behavior, both public and private, the leading idea being that individual citizens were entitled to benefit materially from the city's power. Kallet identifies the origins of this economic success in a unique combination of natural advantages (traditional agriculture, the silver mines and the large port — or *emporion* — the Piraeus) and 'the unprecedented means and opportunity to exploit the Aegean's resources to the imperial city's benefit' (71). Even though she probably underestimates the importance of the lack of regular taxation on citizen property, income or person, for this economic growth (the *eisphorai* were not taxes, *sensu stricto*), the present reviewer finds himself much in agreement with her claim that it is impossible to tell whether the Athenian economy was inextricably embedded in political and social relations or was detached from them much as those proto-modern free market economies with which it was traditionally compared were. As she suggests, 'evidence for both embedded and detached behavior can be amply adduced' (91).

Chapter 4, by Kurt Raaflaub ('Warfare and Athenian Society') provides a systematic discussion of some "traditional" topics, such as Athenian resources and Pericles' strategy, along with some new ones, which do not customarily find their way into companions of this sort: military developments, the soldier's experience of war, the politics of war, and total war. It is impossible to comment here on the plethora of insights that the opening up of these fields generates. It will suffice, however, to focus on one of Raaflaub's sub-sections and contrast it with one of Samon's generalizations. The Peloponnesian War, writes Raaflaub, appears to have been 'an ancient equivalent of a "total war", fought with every means available, affecting virtually the entire Greek world, depriving most communities even of the possibility of remaining neutral, displacing tens of thousands of persons, and causing untold miseries. The after-effects of this war, visible not least in armies of refugees and hordes of unemployed mercenaries, plagued the Greek world for decades to come' (111). Raaflaub then proceeds to evaluate the Athenian's emotional reactions to this war experience: 'In *Suppliant Women*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, and *Trojan Women*, Euripides raises doubts about the justification of wars and the motives of the political leaders promoting wars. He questions the glory and benefits accruing to the victors and demonstrates that they too lose out by paying a price that is far too high' (ibid.). This is strangely at odds with Samon's central motto spelt out in the conclusion, namely that the Periclean age should be viewed as a paragon of war, nationalism and imperialism, rather than of humanity and sublime literature (on which see below).

The latter interpretation is followed to some extent by Kenneth Lapatin in Chapter 5 ('Art and Architecture'). Seeking, at the opening of his essay, an explanation for 'the extraordinary aesthetic quality of [Athenian] monuments', Lapatin surveys the main artistic and architectural masterpieces produced in the period under discussion, some of which are visually reproduced in the volume (Figures 1-43). In his view, the artistic excellence of these works of art is often vitiated by the ideological premises that underpinned them ('those who created them may have shared something of the outlook of politicians and poets') (128). Most of them, furthermore, 'have nothing demonstrably democratic about [them]' (ibid.), even though they were undoubtedly created in the

period under discussion. Lapatin has many interesting things to say concerning the interplay of art and ideology, but his exposés are often marred by clichés. I cite just two: ‘they [i.e. classical Greek statues and paintings] functioned as normative images that served ideological ends ... [they] provided examples, both positive and negative, of qualities and behaviors to be emulated and avoided’ (128), and ‘This [i.e. stele of Hegeso] and other stelai that visually construct identities to suit a variety of social circumstances present the potential virtue of every citizen who willingly conforms to the expectations of the community’ (147). To the mind of the present reviewer the greatness of the artistic and architectural masterpieces in question lies not so much in the spirit of conformism with which some of them are certainly infused as in the audacity displayed by others to challenge the traditional order of things — even to the point of subverting it.

Chapter 6, by Cynthia Patterson (‘Other Sorts: Slaves, Foreigners, and Women in Periclean Athens’), probes the social fabric of Periclean Athens. Though she places slaves, foreigners and women in the same basket (which is a bit odd, in view of the fact that the former two constituted jural categories, or “orders”, which the third did not), she warns us right at the beginning that ‘the three sets of polarities combined to create a complex set of identities and a community in which male and female members of citizen households lived side by side with free and enslaved foreigners, male and female’ (153). Her treatment of slaves starts with a well balanced account of the wider picture, and continues with a series of case studies, such as that of Evangelos, Pericles’ estate manager, the workmen on the Acropolis and the fugitive slaves of Thucydides 7.27. The same method of analysis is applied in the sub-section on the various types of foreigners, the *xenoi* and *xenoi metoikoi* that visited Athens or resided there. Patterson provides an up-to-date account of their general privileges and disabilities, reminding us that, nonetheless, ‘Periclean Athens was a remarkably open society’ (163). She then proceeds to individual case studies, such as the visiting philosophers Anaxagoras and Protagoras and the arms manufacturer Cephalus. Patterson’s treatment of women is, in a sense, an attempt to redress the exaggerated image of the Athenian woman that has lately found currency in research as one of the most under-privileged and oppressed social types of antiquity. She points out, amongst other things, that the feminine form of citizen, *politiss* and (plural) *astai* did occur, that the citizenship law of 451/0 did give Athenian women considerable advantages, and that, in consequence, ‘they were shareholders in the polis and beneficiaries of her prosperity’ (167). This chapter, an important contribution to the social history of Periclean Athens, concludes with case studies of individual women or groups of women (e.g. Elpinice, sister of Cimon, and the women of Pericles’ audience).

In Chapter 7 (‘Drama and Democracy’), Jeffrey Henderson retells the story of Athenian drama from a political angle, his central thesis being that it ‘intersected the development of democracy following the Cleisthenic reforms at significant points’ (180). Noting first the sheer scale of artistic activities (‘In the fifth century alone, members of the citizen body no larger than 30,000-50,000 supported the production of some 2,000 dithyrambs, 1,250 tragedies, and 650 comedies’ (180), he proceeds to characterize drama with a stronger emphasis on its social than on its artistic aspects. His central claim is that Athenian drama was a traditional elite activity that was harnessed by the democracy for the enjoyment of the people, but ultimately became ‘predicated on the

theory of the ultimate wisdom, and trainability in wisdom, of the citizenry' (186). The most impressive part of the chapter is the one in which Henderson attempts to reconstruct the shifting sentiments and emotions of the population concerning issues such as the good old days of early democracy, the hostility to politicians of the stamp of Pericles and Cleon, and the justification for empire, based on information extracted from drama alone. This is an original piece, which in the light of prevailing views to the contrary will predictably generate some controversy.

The next, Chapter 8, by J. P. Sickinger ('The Bureaucracy of Democracy and Empire'), is explicitly polemical, the author taking issue with scholars who have tried to downplay and minimize the functions of writing in classical Athens. He argues that non-lapidary texts (wooden tablets and sheets of papyrus) were produced aplenty, and their functions expanded in proportion with the increased volume of business during the fifth century. Inscriptions, consequently, tell only a very limited part of the story of Athenian bureaucratic practice as their publication was restricted and 'formed just a small part of the administrative apparatus of the age of Pericles' (211). Sickinger convincingly demonstrates that documents recorded on perishable materials that did not survive were essential for running wide areas of Athenian government, but has relatively little to say on the structure and function of the bureaucratic system itself to which this chapter is devoted.

The highly original Chapter 9, by Robert W. Wallace ('Plato's Sophists, Intellectual History after 450, and Sokrates'), dispels the widespread view, based largely on uncritical acceptance of Plato, that there existed a huge conceptual gap between the Sophists and Plato (which includes Socrates). Wallace provides compelling arguments that the Sophists were not merely traveling professors of wisdom who received handsome payment for teaching aspiring politicians how to persuade multitudes and acquire dominion over others. They formed, in fact, a far more complex and diverse social group. They were brilliant intellectuals who engaged not only in rhetoric but in a wide range of philosophical questions that later generations would find significant. They were neither amoral, as they often professed to teach *aretē*, "virtue" or "excellence", nor "relativists", never attempting to reduce everything to a matter of subjective opinion.

While pursuing this thesis, Wallace provides a masterly outline of the intellectual history of the age. The age of Pericles was 'antidogmatic, skeptical, and relentlessly critical' (221). Polymathy was a contemporary trait, with intellectuals engaging in language, history, poetry, mnemonics, music and archaeology, side by side with mathematics, physics, metaphysics, astronomy, and cosmology, high theory mixing with empirical research, and yes, even with political wisdom and practical sagacity. Between c. 450 and the first years of the Peloponnesian War there was a real outburst of intellectual creativity, suffused with a mood of progressive optimism; the activities of Pericles and his two main counselors, Damon and Anaxagoras, illustrate this trend. However, Pericles' death in 429, and the plague, mark a turning point. Following these events, intellectuals withdrew from politics and democracy, and, as exemplified by the case of Antiphon, became a 'darker, more negative force' (226). Both the new politicians, as exemplified by Cleon and Anytos, and the demos, became hostile to intellectual activity, 'primarily because intellectuals had become more extreme, more

isolated from the demos, and less sympathetic to the democracy' (230). This was the intellectual climate that led up to the anti-democratic revolutions of 411 and 404.

Wallace contends that far from being unlike the "sophists", as Plato would have it, Socrates was, in fact, remarkably like them. In fact, his affiliation with that darker, more negative force in politics made him very much a part of the intellectual life of his times. In 404 some of his students helped overthrow Athens' democracy, murdering some 1,500 citizens to steal their money, in patent contradiction to Socrates' teaching that goodness was the highest virtue. Rather than repudiating them, however, Socrates went about Athens preaching that democracy was a bad form of government and should be replaced. In view of these facts, his conviction and execution were not altogether unjust.

This bold re-interpretation of fifth-century intellectual history is bound to arouse some controversy.

The treatment of the state's democratic system, by Raphael Sealey, is relegated, for reasons unknown, to the penultimate place of this collection (Chapter 11, 'Democratic Theory and Practice'). Nor does it fit into it easily, giving the impression that it was written with a different purpose in mind. Neither an account of the emergence of the polis, nor of the evolution of democracy's political institutions, is strictly necessary for an introduction to the age of Pericles. A dry, factual account of the assembly, the two councils (that of 500 and the Areopagos) and offices is followed by a disproportionately more detailed, but highly technical, exposé of the judicial organs and processes. The chapter concludes in an assessment of 'demokratia and independent courts', the central claim being that it was the independence of the judicial organs of the state (i.e. the various law courts) from their political organs (i.e. the assembly) that safeguarded the liberty of the citizen. This reads very much like a version of the modern theory of the separation of powers of the state institutions, without however taking into account the fact that in Athens, unlike in modern states, both the judicial and political state organs were manned by the same people. Citizens could have exercised *psēphophoria* in the law courts one day, *cheirotomia* in the assembly another day. Both state organs could exercise the same authority. That is the reason why the courts often appear as extensions of the assembly, concentrating on jurisdiction rather than policy making. This institutional arrangement hardly justifies the claim that the independence of the judicial authority safeguarded the liberty of the citizen. The citizen could exercise his supreme powers in both types of institution without hindrance.

The last, Chapter 11 in this collection ('Athens and Sparta and the Coming of the Peloponnesian War'), by J. E. Lendon, is given over to the differences and rivalry between Athens and Sparta, to Greek thinking about the causes of war in general and the origins of the Peloponnesian War in particular, and to a greatly detailed description of the period of fifty years that preceded the outbreak of the war, known as the *Pentecontaetia*. Lendon claims that Thucydides' highly influential, "fear-of-power" explanation as the 'the truest cause of the war' ('the growing greatness of the Athenians, and the fear that this inspired, which compelled the Lacedaemonians to go to war') was wrong. The war broke out not so much over questions of power, but those of rank. 'Rank is related to, and in part derivative of, the power of a state, but is conceptually distinct' (261). If I understand him correctly, rank is some kind of collective counterpart to what

figures in individuals as self-esteem, prestige, honor or worth. Lendon claims that the description of the outbreak of a war between Argos and Mycenae in the 460s by Diodorus of Sicily (11.65.1-3), caused by rivalry in rank, provides 'a handy tool with which to understand the origins of the Peloponnesian War' (263). The trouble with this view is that it differs only very little from the "fear-of-power" explanation, replacing as it does one mono-causal explanation with another. Historians of other periods have made some progress in this respect, for instance the chapter 'Causation in History' in Richard J. Evans' *In Defence of History* (1997) that indicates some multi-causal alternatives as explanation. The present reviewer has a strong feeling that ancient historians and classicists could advance more in their endeavors if they would familiarize themselves with such developments.

We may now come back to Samons' views concerning the Periclean age, which, as we have remarked at the beginning of this review article, are strangely at odds not only with those of this volume's individual contributors, but also with most of the views that scholars have previously proffered. Samons offers a radical re-interpretation of Pericles' Funeral Oration which falls nothing short of the extraordinary. He contends that the primary thrust of this Oration is 'thoroughly militaristic, collectivist, and unstintingly nationalistic' (282), and that these terms also aptly characterize Athenian society as a whole. If he is right, then most of what has been said so far about Periclean Athens must be wrong.

But is he? The terms he uses, clearly in a pejorative sense, are imprecise. Their meanings depend to a large extent upon their users' ideology or point of view. This imprecision can, however, be reduced to some extent by outlining the terms' contours and by observing the historical societies to which they are customarily applied. The information in the following three paragraphs has been gathered from a multiplicity of dictionaries and encyclopedias that are available online.

"Militarism" denotes a doctrine or system that values war *per se*, exalts military virtues, symbols and ceremonies (usually without justification), and conveys predominance to a military class or its values by maintaining (often unnecessarily) a policy of aggressive military preparedness. In modern history, ideal-type militarism was approximated by Japan from 1931 to 1945 and by Germany during the later stages of World War I. In classical antiquity it was approximated, typically, by Sparta and republican Rome.

"Collectivist" is used in anthropology and cultural psychology to describe cultures that are the very opposite of "individualist". Individualist cultures are characterized by strong interpersonal competition, group goals often being viewed as secondary to personal achievement. Collectivist cultures are characterized by a strong sense of cooperation and a corresponding lack of interpersonal competition, individual goals often being viewed as secondary to group goals. Ideal-type individualistic cultures are those of the United States and Western Europe, ideal-type collectivist cultures are those of China, Korea and Japan.

The term "nationalistic" embodies a whole range of meanings that are often contradictory. The primary one is "loyalty and devotion to a nation". Its close synonym is "patriotism". Samons, however, clearly has a different nuance in mind. Pericles'



speech is, in his view, *excessively* nationalistic. Placing primary emphasis on the promotion of Athens' interests and culture, it presupposes, in his view, attitudes of superiority and power over other states. The close synonym of these attitudes is "chauvinism". There is no need here to provide examples of ideal-type chauvinistic cultures, as they are known to all.

Even a superficial re-reading of the Funeral Oration will suffice to show how widely these labels are off the mark. Pericles' speech can be said to be militaristic only if it is assumed that it should be pacifistic. But why should it? The references to state power that Samons underscores to make his point are due to the great war in which Athens was engaged. Blaming Pericles for militarism makes no more sense than blaming Churchill for such in his 'We Shall Fight on the Beaches' speech (delivered in 1940). In fact, in Pericles' speech the power motif is not an end in itself but a means to an end. By virtue of the dominance they had achieved — and the wealth that came therewith — the Athenians were able to cultivate a whole set of virtues and activities that were conspicuous in their non-military nature: the capacity to resolve conflicts and ensure the prevalence of cordial relationships, an openness to the outside world, the love and cultivation of beauty ('without extravagance', Thuc. 2.40.1), and the indulgence in pleasant home surroundings, recreational festivals, sublime literature, contests and rituals. In Pericles' account, even the courage that the Athenians displayed during the first year of the war is ascribed to this way of life. He contrasts this courage with the state-induced courage of the Spartans, which was achieved through practicing austerity and driving oneself perpetually to the limit. With its ban on culture and recreational luxuries, and unilateral devotion to martial virtues and practices, Sparta was the quintessential militaristic society, not Athens.

Nor can Pericles' speech be said to be collectivist, however we use that term. In fact, it contains an explicit refutation of this. Pericles must have realized that the call for unity that the war situation required might provoke criticism. Athenians could argue that the communal effort they were asked to make would reduce individual differences, and risk their turning into a nation of obedient pawns. The following phrase was probably designed to anticipate such criticism: 'In my opinion each single one of our citizens, in all the manifold aspects of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and do this, moreover, with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility' (2.41.1, trans. Rex Warner). He was undoubtedly right, at least if we compare Athens with Sparta. Spartan society fostered consensus, creating a nation of hypothetical equals. It demanded personal self-effacement, and the tacit approval of policies made by others. Athenian society encouraged active personal involvement. It insisted that the Athenians themselves forge policies through debate and disagreement, and make decisions on public questions. Sparta was the typical collectivist society, not Athens. Athens was individualist.

Was Pericles, finally, nationalistic? Samons has no doubts that he was: 'Modern sensibilities recoil — and should recoil — from the naked nationalism of Pericles' orations, a nationalism that one cannot dismiss as merely empty rhetoric. Athens' consistent drive to Aegean hegemony after the 460s confirms this aggressive sense of national superiority as a guiding principle of Athenian interaction with other states and a

fundament of the Athenians' self-image' (284). Samons' trump card is Thuc. 2.41, in which Pericles' famous proclamation that Athens was a "school", or "education," for Greece is said to rest on a military foundation, and Thuc. 2.64.3, in which the city's resources and magnitude are attributed to the Athenians' 'hold[ing] rule over more Greeks than any other Greek state', and their sustaining 'the greatest wars against their united and separate powers'. Taken out of context, these passages might indeed seem chauvinistic to the modern mind. The impression changes, however, as soon as we are reminded, by Thucydides himself, a man terribly mistreated by his native city, that the Athenians in their interaction with other states won friends by giving, not by taking, and that they did not calculate an immediate return but trusted in other's generosity; that their empire was not the outcome of a quick succession of wars and conquests, but the legacy of an alliance of city-states that had been formed to combat a formidable external foe; that the justification the Athenians most commonly adduced for their empire was not the "right of the strongest", as almost all ancient empires did, but the anxiety that if they relinquished it they would perish; that a large majority of the cities incorporated in the empire were democratic, living in peace with the Athenians and collaborating with them willingly. None of these facts, or characterizations, fit the description of an 'aggressive sense of national superiority'. Athens was no doubt imperialistic; she was not nationalistic. Nor did she become a "school", or "education" for other Greek states by forcibly imposing her values upon them. She became their "school" or "education" by arousing in them the desire to emulate her. Rather than unstintingly nationalistic, it would be more correct to say that Pericles' speech was unstintingly patriotic.

Samons is right in warning us that we should stop treating Periclean Athens as an object of adulation. He is wrong, however, when he suggests that we should swap this adulation for condemnation. Neither attitude is strictly necessary for gaining an understanding of how the first known democracy in world history was formed, how it functioned, and what its guiding ideals were. But gaining such an understanding *is* important. As Jacob Burckhardt, no great fan of democratic Athens, has put it: 'It must be admitted that this [i.e. the Funeral Oration] helps us to a better knowledge of the Athenians. Human beings are not simply what they are, but also what they set up for themselves as ideals, and even if they can never come up to those ideals, the mere will to do so defines something of their nature'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization*, ed. Oswyn Murray, trans. Sheila Stern (New York, 1998), 225.