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HOW TO PERFORM A DEMOCRACY:

A GENEALOGY OF THE BARE VOICE

BY

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Abstract of the Dissertation

How to Perform a Democracy:

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My dissertation argues that participatory democracy is born out of a unique mode of aesthetic performance. This thesis is based on recent French and Italian philosophy concerning democracy, inequality, and political representation. My point of departure, however, is Plato's genealogy of democracy in Book 3 of the *Laws*, where Plato explains that participatory democracy in Athens was a result of a prior revolution in the city's theater. This work is an extension of Plato's genealogy into the kind of poetry and theater and philosophy that Plato says was responsible for a revolution that brought political and economic equality to Athens.

The first question that my dissertation raises is that of Plato's *Laws*: What gave birth to direct democracy in Athens? When did sovereignty end and democracy begin? And if this took place in Athens' theater, as Plato says it did, how was democracy first performed? How was it choreographed as if it were a dramatic action on the stage in the theater?

The second question that I consider is less genealogical and more fundamentally philosophical: What was behind Plato and Aristotle's attempt to

censor this kind of art specifically? Following the recent work of Foucault, Rancière, and Agamben on ancient Greek political philosophy and democracy, I argue that the pillar and cornerstone of 4th Century Greek philosophy, proper political speech or *logos*, was not, as many have argued, an equalizer that allowed for equal and rational speakers; it was a direct confrontation with *isēgoria* or the equality of speech, and it amounted to the invention of sovereignty. I show that as *logos* or exceptional speech was instituted as proper forms of political participation, a second class of voices were excluded, and even invented, by the same stroke. In short, I show that sovereignty was invented through a form of exclusion in language.

Chapter One of this study is an extensive presentation of the origins of the kind of theater and poetry that led to the initial democratic revolution in Athens. Chapter Two shows how this particular performativity was prohibited in the political works of Plato and Aristotle for the sake of a fundamental turn toward sovereignty and political representation. Finally, Chapter Three of this work discusses the extensive reconsideration of this kind of performativity in Jacques Derrida's reading of Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* in *Of Grammatology*, and, more generally, in the democratic turn in French philosophy prior to the events of May '68.

For my friends in New York

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CLASSICAL ABBREVIATIONS

Aeschin.		Aeschines
	3	*Against Ktesiphon*
Aesch.		Aeschylus
	Supp.	Suppliant Women
Ath.		Athenaeus
Arist.		Aristotle
	Ath. Pol.	Athenian Constitution
	De audib.	De audibilibus
	Eth. Nic.	Nicomachean Ethics
	H.A.	History of Animals
	Metaph.	Metaphysics
	P.A.	Parts of Animals
	Poet.	Poetics
	Pol.	Politics
	Rh.	Rhetoric
Dem.		Demosthenes
Eur.		Euripides
	Supp.	Suppliants
Gorg.		Gorgias
	Hel.	Encomium to Helen
Hes.		Hesiod
	Theog.	Theogony
Hdt.		Herodotus
Isoc.		Isocrates
	15	Antidosis
LSJ		Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*
Lys.		Lysias
	6	Against Andocides

Pind.		Pindar
	Pyth.	Pythian Odes
Pl.		Plato
	Ap.	Apology
	Euthyd.	Euthydemus
	Euthphr.	Euthyphro
	Hipparch.	Hipparchus
	Leg.	Laws
	L.	Letters
	Menex.	Menexenus
	Resp.	Republic
	Phdr.	Phaedrus
	Plt.	Statesman
Plut.		Plutarch
	De mus.	On Music
	Dem.	Demosthenes
	Mor.	Moralia
	Phil.	Philopoemen
PMG		Poetae Melici Graeci
Soph.		Sophocles
	Ant.	Antigone
Suda		The Suda Lexicon
Thuc.		Thucydides
Xen.		Xenophon
	Hell.	Hellenica
	Mem.	Memorabilia

Preface

Democracy or Oligarchy

I.

Throughout the 5th and 4th Century BCE, a debate took place in Athens between supporters of participatory democracy and supporters of a new "aristocratic" democracy that many saw as favoring the wealthy.[1] At stake in this debate was whether participatory democracy would go on and have a future, or whether democracy would be mixed or blended with aristocracy and oligarchy so that the majority of citizens would no longer participate in the political decisions of the city.

Michel Foucault spent the last years of his life studying this historical period during the 1980s at the peak of modern neoliberalism. What was Foucault noticing about democracy in his late work on the self?

Foucault observes that distinctions between equals in Athens' democracy came to be inscribed in the late 5th century on the basis of one's

[1] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 174. See for instance, Pl. *Leg.* 756e-757a: "A system of selection like that will effect a compromise between a monarchical and a democratic constitution, which is precisely the sort of compromise a constitution should always be. You see, even if you proclaim that a master and his slave shall have equal status, friendship between them is inherently impossible." For Plato's Athenian, the aristocratic period in Athens democracy after the Battle of Salamis represents a return to a better, older pre-democratic constitution or an "ancient code of laws" (Pl. *Leg.* 698c, 699c). Aristotle also praises this aristocratic period as a time of excellence, modesty, and integrity (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23, 25).

ability in language.[2] As Foucault writes, "[T]rue discourse introduces something completely different and irreducible to the egalitarian structure of democracy."[3] Although everybody can speak (i.e. *isēgoria*), democracy in the late 5th century becomes "indexed to the *logos* of truth" and "only a few can tell the truth."[4] "[O]nce only a few can tell the truth," Foucault continues, "a difference is produced [in the field of democracy] which is that of the ascendancy exercised by some over others."[5]

In a democracy in which every citizen had an equal voice in politics, it was the emergence of true discourse, that is, *logos*, which re-introduced the hierarchy between the proper ruler and the ruled, between the leaders and the masses, between the aristocracy and the democrats. *Logos* is what "make[s] possible the proper direction of the city through the exercise of ascendancy…" the recognition of those fit for rule.[6]

Although Foucault died of an illness in the midst of these lectures, others took up his unfinished notes. In a section of a book that was published in 1983 and titled "The Order of Discourse" the title of Foucault's famous inaugural lecture at the Collège de France Jacques Rancière studied the birth of inequality in democracy through a reading of Plato's *Republic*. Rancière shows convincingly that the linguistic distinction between "the living *logos* of the philosopher" and "the noise of the Many" inscribes this split among equals.[7]

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[2] Language fits neatly into the culture of the self as an expression of the soul. See Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 200; Pl. *Resp*. 3.

[3] Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 184.

[4] Ibid.,174, 183-4

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 200.

[7] Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, trans. John Drury, Corinne, Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 39, 40.

"A popular philosophy, indeed every democratic utterance, is constrained by that division," he writes.[8]

Elsewhere in Italy, Giorgio Agamben has followed Foucault's late lectures in order to analyze what he calls the logic of sovereignty — or, as Agamben says, how people were included and excluded from politics on the basis of a theory of language.[9] Through this logic of sovereignty, the people's voices were distinguished from proper political speech or *logos* at the same time as they were excluded from political participation. "Modern democracy," he continues, which was supposed to be the "vindication and liberation" of this second-rate voice, has "not succeeded in constructing the link between…between voice and language…that would have healed the fracture."[10]

The historical analyses by Foucault, Rancière, and Agamben have proven three irreversible facts about philosophy's role in the development of democracy — three facts that undergird our present politics at their deepest or most radical roots. First, the linguistic division between the voices of the many and the *logos* of the few was utilized by the aristocrats in Athens as the future of direct democracy was being decided. Second, the pillar and cornerstone of Greek philosophy, proper political speech or *logos*, was not, as many have argued, an equalizer that allowed for equal and rational speakers; it was a direct confrontation with *isēgoria* or the equality of speech, and it amounted to the invention of sovereignty. Finally, as *logos* and speech were instituted as proper

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[8] Ibid., 39.

[9] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 9: "The link between bare life and politics is the same link…in the relation between phōnē and logos." He continues, "Western politics has not succeeded in constructing the link between zoē and bios, between voice and language, that would have healed the fracture. Bare life remains included in politics in the form of an exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion," 11.

[10] Ibid., 9, 11.

forms of participating in "mixed" or representative democracy, a second class of voices were excluded, and even invented, by the same stroke.

* * *

The history of Western philosophy has for the most part been various sails on the same ship of *logos* — from the *logos* of the ancient Greeks to its translation by Cicero as *ratio* to its re-translation as *speech* in more modern times. What remains to be explored is the other side of this division — a history of excluded, marginal, or bare voices.[11]

The bare voice is a howl in the street. A footstep in the march to the square or even a color raised in objection. There is no reason to listen to it in a "mixed" or aristocratic politics because it has been excluded in a prior contract to which it never agreed.[12]

This work first set out to write a genealogy or history of this other side of the voice. It then stumbled upon an almost forbidden ancient Greek word that was criticized by Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau alike, even though the word was never discussed in the genealogies of Foucault, Rancière, or Agamben.

This word, *polyphōnia*, meaning "many voices" or "multi-voiced," seems to have involved three basic elements: First, it described when sounds or voices

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[11] Cf. Arist. *Pol*.1253a7-18. Aristotle makes a division between those in the city who have *logos* and those who have mere *voice*.

[12] Nietzsche comments on false social contracts in *The Genealogy of Morals*: "I have used the word 'commonwealth,' but it should be clearly understood what I mean: a pack of savages, a race of conquerors, themselves organized for war and able to organize others, fiercely dominating a population perhaps vastly superior in numbers yet amorphous and nomadic. Such was the beginning of the human polity; I take it we have got over that sentimentalism that would have it begin with a contract. What do men who can command, who are born rulers, who evince power in act and deportment, have to do with contracts? Such beings are unaccountable…. Their work is an instinctive imposing of forms. They are the most spontaneous, most unconscious artists that exist…," Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Random House, 1956), 219-20.

did not conform to a hierarchical discourse. Second, it suggested a unique kind of association or assembly: a kind of heap that refused to organize into a well-ordered or harmonious sum.[13] Finally, the word *polyphōnia* described an event that was connected strongly with the birth of direct democracy in Athens.

Polyphōnia, then, was not only an enunciation away from hierarchical discourse. It was a kind of rebuilding elsewhere. And yet the association that it described was never fixed. The power that it connoted was constituent and irruptive. And the event that it indicates appears to have been the initial practice of direct democracy before there was even such a name.

II.

Like Foucault, who turned to a study of Athens' "culture of the self" at the height of modern neoliberalism, this genealogy is a study of democracy for its own unique historical situation. Although the world's governments insist on "democracy," one need only look at the number of intentional abstentions in elections, the lowest recorded government approval ratings in history, or the surge of occupations and protests around the world to see that modern, representative democracy has entered a new era of crisis.[14] As Pierre Rosanvallon has written, "The erosion of citizens' confidence in their leaders and in political institutions…" is the "…political problem of our time."[15]

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[13] Plato and Aristotle, for instance, describe the association of *polyphōnia* as the enemy and binary other of Greek harmony, which we know was not only a musical phenomenon, but also a comprehensive political theory.

[14] Cf. Marc Crépon and Bernard Stiegler, *De la démocratie participative: fondements et limites* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2007), 25.

[15] Pierre Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie. La politique à l'âge de la défiance* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006), 9. My translation.

Instead of greater democracy and equality, modern, representative democracy has produced a growing political and economic plutocracy.[16] As inequality surges and contemporary citizens feel as though they have no voice in their politics, protests and occupations across the world define themselves as leaderless.[17] Political philosophers speak of the end of sovereignty as others practice "horizontal" assemblies with rotating facilitators.

In Argentina, they shout, "Que se vayan todos," "They all must go." In Greece, they adopt the Zapatista's slogan, "Ya basta!," "Enough is enough!" In the United States of America, they chant, "*This* is what democracy looks like." Unlike many protests, slogans for these gatherings are not demands to deliver to the current system of government. Nightly assemblies, facilitators, leaderless procedures, and chants like "another world is possible" suggest that these protests are an inquiry into a *future* politics another form of politics altogether.

Are we witnessing the rebirth of a kind of democratic practice that is largely without representation? The political question being asked in squares around the world goes something like this: How should we perform a democracy one without representation? How would we choreograph it as if it were an action on the stage in a theater?

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[16] See, for instance, Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," *Perspectives on Politics*, American Political Science Association, vol. 12, no. 3 (September 2014): 564-581; Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[17] See, for instance, Dario Azzellini and Marina Sitrin, *They Can't Represent Us!: Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2014).

Non satis scire

To know is not enough

Introduction

Polyphōnia: A Genealogy of the Bare Voice

Part I: The Theater of Democracy

I.

The ancient Greek word *polyphōnia*, meaning many voices or multi-voiced, may describe an event in the theater that led to Athens' democratic revolution.[1] What we know for sure about this event is almost nothing.

II.

Plato tells us vividly in the *Laws* that what originally brought democracy to Athens was a revolutionary event in poetry, music, and theater. The question that Plato's *Laws* raises is genealogical: What event gave birth to the practice of "democracy" in Athens? When did sovereignty end and participatory democracy begin? And if this event took place in Athens' theater, as people think it did, how was democracy first performed? How was it choreographed as if it were an action on the stage in the theater?

[1] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c. Unless otherwise noted, the translation is that of J.H. Bromby in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ of Plutarch* (College House: The Press of C. Whittingham, 1822), 73. Bromby is especially attentive to the overall tone or voice of the author, which is often marked by the consternation of a traditionalist or social conservative.

III.

Before there was democracy, says the Athenian in Plato's *Laws*, there was the event of "theatrocracy," or a moment in which the people began to collectively rule the theater. In the "event" that brought democracy to Athens, "music proved to be the starting point…."[2] First, composers broke the strict laws concerning music.[3] Then, "audiences, once silent, began to use their voices."[4] They showed their disapproval with "catcalls and uncouth yelling" and indicated their enjoyment with applause.[5] They even set themselves up as judges in the theater.[6] Instead of "a 'musical meritocracy,' a sort of vicious 'theatrocracy' arose" a "democracy" that was not limited to the theater, but that gave birth to direct or participatory democracy in Athens.[7] As a result of what had taken place in the theater, people grew unwilling to submit to their authorities. They refused to obey their "betters" or even the "admonitions of their fathers."[8] "The conviction that they *knew* made them unafraid, and assurance engendered effrontery."[9]

IV.

Strangely, here Plato is not referring to the initial democratic revolution in Athens of 508/7 BCE. He is speaking of a *second* revolution in the mid-5th century BCE

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[2] Pl. *Leg.* 701a. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Plato's *Laws* are those of Trevor J. Saunders, found in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

[3] Pl. *Leg.* 700b. Cf. *LSJ* 1080. The word *nomoi*, the name of Plato's dialogue, refers to law and music at once. As Liddell and Scott note, at the time of Plato and Aristotle, *nomos* in its musical sense refers only to the kind of melody that accompanies epic texts. Only later does *nomos* come to describe a composition that includes both words and melody.

[4] Pl. *Leg.* 701a.

[5] Pl. *Leg.* 700c.

[6] Pl. *Leg.* 701a.

[7] Pl. *Leg.* 701a.

[8] Pl. *Leg.* 701b.

[9] Pl. *Leg.* 701b.

from aristocracy to direct democracy.[10] After the Battle of Salamis (c. 480 BCE), an aristocracy had suspended or replaced democracy in Athens.[11] The birth of democracy that Plato is describing is a revolution from this aristocracy to a more participatory or anarchic democracy, or to a government in which there was no longer any authority, sovereignty, or hierarchy.[12]

V.

There is some reason to think that this unnamed event in the theater refers to a movement in performance art known to the ancient Greeks as *polyphōnia*. In addition to the fact that Plato's description of the music matches that of *polyphōnia*, and that the dates and locations that Plato offers are concurrent with those of *polyphōnia*, the *polyphōnia* movement within theater appears to have been highly political and radically democratic.

VI.

Our knowledge of *polyphōnia* in Athens' theater is as fragmented as the "frittered" music itself.[13] What little we know about it has to be pieced together from later commentaries and fragments. Unfortunately, none of these sources are very reliable. Our most extensive source on *polyphōnia* is a commentary supposedly written by Plutarch, *On Music*. But like many aristocratic writers, the Plutarch only offers us a history of *polyphōnia* in order to prohibit or ridicule it. Even the authorship and the dates of this commentary are uncertain.

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[10] Pl. *Leg*. 698b-699c; 701a. This is why Plato describes the event as a transition from aristocracy to democracy.

[11] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23.

[12] Pl. *Leg*. 699e; 701a.

[13] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1136b. Translation is that of Bromby in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 39.

VII.

In the Plutarch's genealogy of *polyphōnia*, the author writing as Plutarch tells us that, with *polyphōnia*, ancient Greek music was altered as if a "revolution" or complete transformation had taken place.[14] His description of polyphony closely resembles the descriptions of the democratic theater in Plato's *Laws*.[15] Beyond these similarities, a mere coincidence invites us to follow the scent of this trail further: The Plutarch's genealogy of *polyphōnia* is discussed at length by Rousseau as the historical reason for the degeneration of politics.[16] Rousseau's discussion of polyphony is also singled out and examined thoroughly in Jacques Derrida's 1967 reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*.[17] This coincidence led to the writing of this work.

VIII.

The Plutarch's genealogy of Greek music names the inventor of *polyphōnia* as Lasos of Hermione.[18] The ancient commentator tells us that Lasos's style of music introduced more chords and notes to singing and playing so that, for instance, a flute that had four notes might have six or seven, or later, that a lyre that had five strings

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[14] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c. See Bromby translation in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 73.

[15] Like Plato, the Plutarch laments the loss of the simple, ancient system of music and places the blame on the practitioners of all-varying music ([Plut.] *De mus.* 15, 27, 29, 30). The description of the "mixed" and "varied" music and the insubordination of the musicians matches that of Athenian's in the *Laws* (Pl. *Leg.* 700a-c. Cf. *Leg.* 812d-e). And like Plato, the Plutarch blames the degeneration of music and society squarely on the theater ([Plut.] *De mus.* 15, 27).

[16] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7, ed., trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England, 1998), 329-30. Rousseau publishes his book on language in the same year as his treatise on modern democracy, the *Social Contract*.

[17] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 195-228.

[18] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c.

might have twelve strings.[19] By affecting in his songs a "polyphony" of the flute, through the "incessant division and crowding together of his notes," and "by making his dithyrambic pieces subject to rhythmical laws," Lasos "produced a complete revolution in the art" of music that gave rise to a "licentious multiplicity of notes."[20]

IX.

What is most interesting about Lasos of Hermione is what the Plutarch doesn't tell us about him. The record or chronicle of major cultural and political events in Athens, the *Marmor Parium*, lists *only two* events surrounding the Athenian revolution of 508/7 BCE. The first is the introduction of choral contests in the city under the tyrants in 509/8 BCE; the next entry is not until 494/3 BCE in the democracy, and it lists the victor of the choral contest as one of the most well known practitioners of polyphony.[21] According to another ancient source, the *Suda*, it was Lasos of Hermione who first introduced these choral contests in Athens.[22] Together these two sources tell us that Lasos of Hermione, the first recorded person to practice *polyphōnia*, introduced a certain type of public choral contest in 509/508 BCE, or immediately preceding Athens' democratic revolution in 508/7 BCE.

In addition to introducing public choral contests in Athens in 509/508 BCE and being the person who is said to have invented polyphony in music, Lasos of Hermione was also active as a theorist, having reportedly written the first book on music.[23] What is especially remarkable is that Lasos' poetry appears to have been conceptual: The

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[19] Like Plato in the *Republic*, the Plutarch considers the *polyphōnia* of the flute and the *polychordia* of the lyre to be part of the same phenomenon. See Pl. *Resp*. 399c-d.

[20] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c. See Bromby translation in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 73.

[21] *Das Marmor Parium*, ed. Felix Jacoby (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904), 14-15. See also Jacoby's commentary on pp. 110-12. The name of the victor listed is Melanippides, whom the Ps. Plutarch and Pherecrates name as the leading practitioner of polyphony. See also [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c-1141f.

[22] *Suda*, pp. 506-7, lambda 139.

[23] Ibid.

only work that survives of Lasos is a hymn in which Lasos does not use the Greek letter sigma throughout the entire poem.[24] Some of our nearest references to this style of poetry is found in the collectives *Fluxus* and *Oulipo* of the 1960s, both of which used similar constraints to produce collaborative, aleatory, and improvisational works of poetry or performance art. It is also helpful to think of Lasos poetry in terms of public *situations* or *happenings*. This is about all we know about Lasos.[25]

X.

The Plutarch's description of *polyphōnia* begins to provide an answer to one of most difficult questions surrounding it: What was behind the attempts to stop *polyphōnia* from being performed? The Plutarch, an aristocratic thinker who is trained in Plato's thought, describes polyphony as a corruption,[26] a subordination or a transgression against leaders,[27] a rejection of traditional education and the proper guides for music and philosophy,[28] as lacking any account or explanation,[29] as unsystematic and irrational,[30] as compositions exhibiting wildness and novelty,[31] and as art that goes against good public morals.[32]

The phrase that the Plutarch uses to describe polyphony is also curious. Plutarch describes the music as *pleiosi te phthoggois kai dierrimmenois*.[33] The first word *pleiosi*, from *pleiōn*, can simply mean more in number, size, or extent, but is a word

[24] *PMG* 702; Ath. 10, 455c. Cf. *PMG* 702-6.

[25] One reference to Lasos that was not mentioned is a single line in Herodotus that suggests that Lasos *may* have had influence under the tyrants or at least had the tyrants' trust at some point in the later 6th century BCE. See Hdt. 7.6.3-4.

[26] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c; Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 73.

[27] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c-d.

[28] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142b-d.

[29] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142e.

[30] Ibid.

[31] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142c. See translation of J.H Bromby in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 81.

[32] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142e-f.

[33] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141b-d.

that is often used to describe the masses or crowd, as in *hoi pleunes*,[34] or the people in opposition to the chief men.[35] The noun it describes, *phthoggois*, may mean either the notes on a musical instrument or the voices of either animals or humans.[36] Finally, the word *dierrimmenois*, from *diarriptō*, is used by Plato and Plutarch to describe a kind of scattering or dispersal. In one instance, Plutarch uses this word to describe cities without leadership or representation, or without a strong, consolidated state.[37] The Plutarch's description of *polyphōnia,* then, seems to suggest a political phenomenon in addition to the musical one: it alludes to the scattered voices of a randomly gathered assembly a horizontal, multicolored crowd of all sorts of humans, animals, and nature.[38]

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[34] Hdt. 1.106.

[35] Thuc. 8.73, 89.

[36] We also know that by the second half of the 4th century, *polyphōnia* is often used to describe the voices of animals, especially the song of birds. *LSJ* 1450. For instance, see Arist. *HA* 4, 9, where Aristotle uses *polyphōnia* and distinguishes between voice, language, and sound. Compare this passage with Arist. *Pol.* 1253a 10: "…man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure and pain, and is therefore found in other animals…the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust."

[37] Plut. *Phil.* 8.

[38] Cf. Plato's description of the theater in the *Republic*, Book 10: "The law presumably says that it is finest to keep as quiet as possible in misfortunes and not be irritated…. Now then, the irritable disposition affords much and varied imitation, while the prudent and quiet character, which is always nearly equal to itself, is neither easily imitated nor, when imitated, easily understood, especially by a festive assembly where all sorts of human beings are gathered in a theater… [The irritable and various disposition gets] a good reputation among the many…" (Pl. *Resp*. 604b-605a). Given the way that music is closely bound to the political in ancient Greece [for instance, the word for law and melody is the same *nomos* (*LSJ* 1180)], the choice of these words for the description of polyphony implies a political phenomenon in which a multitude of voices are scattered without representation, leaders, or state. At the same time, the phenomenon is associated with an assembly a peculiar binding together that distinguishes *polyphōnia* from random, isolated notes, and from the individualism of modern, libertarian thought.

XI.

The second poet to be mentioned in the Plutarch's genealogy of *polyphōnia* is Melanippides. Plutarch tells us that Melanippides followed the musical example of Lasos and became widely known as the musician who played *polyphōnia*.[39] Once again, here the description of Melanippides' poetry matches that of the description in Plato's *Laws*.[40] In addition to the affinities with the *Laws*, Melanippides is portrayed as an enemy of everything that Plato's *Republic* tries to institute, including harmony, order, form, nature, and justice.[41] The Plutarch describes Melanippides as the origin of all of Music's wrongs.[42]

XII.

In our chronicle of Athens, the *Parian Marble*, Melanippides is the first person listed to win the poetry festival in the new democracy — but, more specifically, he is the first entry on the chronicle after the democratic revolution.[43] This victory is dated 494/3 BCE — about 14 years after Athens initial democratic revolution in 508/7 BCE and about 14 years before the aristocracy usurped democracy in Athens. Although we are told little else about Melanippides, we can infer something about him from the many practitioners of polyphony who followed his style. These poets included Philoxenus, Timotheus, Phrynis, and Cinesias. Of Philoxenus, for instance, a personified "Music"

[39] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c-f.

[40] The Plutarch says that, after Melanippides, the subordination of the musician to the composer-author stopped [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c-d].

[41] Ibid.

[42] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141d-f.

[43] *Das Marmor Parium*, ed. Felix Jacoby (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904), 15.

curses his poetry as "damnable and off-key."[44] Aristotle speaks of Timotheus and Philoxenus as "low-grade flute players who twist themselves around as though they need to imitate a discus, and drag the choral leader around when they perform…."[45] From these few references, we know only that Melanippides — the second poet named in the history of *polyphōnia* — was somewhat popular in the participatory democracy, and that his music was also seen as an enemy of the sort of musical laws that found favor among the aristocracy.

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XIII.

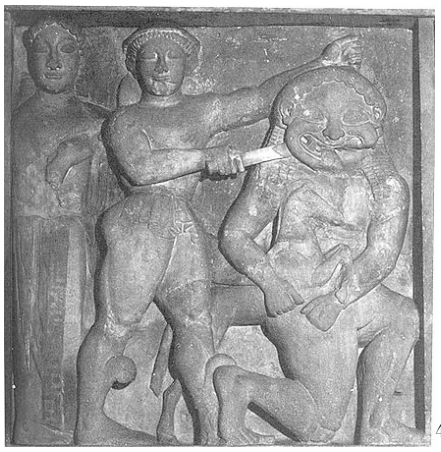
Not long after Melanippides is recorded as the first poet to win at the poetry festival in Athens in the democracy, the far more traditional poet Pindar writes a myth

[44] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142a. Translation is that of Benedict Einarson and Phillip H. De Lacy, in Plutarch's *Moralia*, Vol. XIV, trans. Benedict Einarson, Phillip. H. De Lacy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 425.

[45] Arist. *Poet.* 1448a10-18; 1461b31-35. Later, Rousseau will blame Melanippides for the entire degeneration of music and politics.

[46] An unsigned painting of Medusa by Caravaggio. Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 24×22 in., 1597/8.

about the origin of *polyphōnia*.[47] In Pindar's myth concerning the birth of polyphony, Athena wanted to mimic the shrill sounds of the snake-haired Gorgons when Perseus beheaded their sister Medusa. In Pindar's myth, Athena created a *polyphōnia* from the sounds beneath the snakey hair of the Gorgons' heads.[48] The "many-headed strain" almost seems to connote the hissing of the various snakes on the Gorgons' heads. Alternatively, it might suggest that the Gorgons each had the shrill voice of an animal. This version would be in keeping with ancient depictions of Medusa as having the face of a beast and being especially close with animals.



[49]

As Pindar describes this "many-headed strain," he tells us that this kind of music "entices the people (*laos*) to gather at contests."[50] And, far more fascinating, when he describes the people or contest gatherers, he uses the Greek word *laos* a word that describes *working people* as opposed to non-workers, *common people* as

[47] Pind. *Pyth*. 12. The Plutarch shows his strong approval for Pindar's more traditional and formal style at [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142b-c.

[48] We continue to find depictions of the Gorgon sisters as hissing, evil women in popular retellings of Medusa, the most famous of the three Gorgon sisters.

[49] Metope of Perseus with the aid of Athena beheading Medusa from the Temple of Selinus, c. 550 BCE.

[50] Pind. *Pyth*. 12. 8-10, 17-25.

opposed to leaders, *soldiers* as opposed to military generals, political *subjects* as opposed to princes, *laypeople* as opposed to priests, *peripheral country-folk* as opposed to city-dwellers; the word is even used to describe *natives* and *slaves*.[51] Still, according to Liddell and Scott's Greek lexicon, the word *laos* not only describes these people; it depicts them as a "people assembled," a "multitude."[52]

XIV.

Pindar's account confirms the image of *polyphōnia* that we have only begun to piece together or collage: It describes *polyphōnia* as a radically egalitarian kind of poetry that the most common people *and even non-citizens* began to perform against the wishes of the aristocracy. It also suggests that *polyphōnia* gave rise to new forms of public association — new festivals or contests in the theater in which former spectators and even outsiders now had an active or participatory role. Finally, it dates this transformation in music around the time of both democratic revolutions in Athens. Because of the lack of reliable sources, it would be a stretch to assume that this event in music was responsible for the birth of participatory democracy in Athens — unless, of course, Plato is referring to *polyphōnia* when he tells of the birth of democracy in Athens' theater.

[51] See *LSJ* 1029-1030.
[52] Ibid.

Part II: An Event of the Bare Voice

I.

As we see from the passage in Plato's *Laws*, the history of *polyphōnia* is closely caught up with a philosophical interpretation of its event. This interpretation begins in the 4th century in Book III of Plato's *Republic*. This notion was extended in Plato's late political work, the *Laws*, and was then extended further by Aristotle, Plutarch, and Rousseau before it was eventually critiqued in French philosophy in the 1960s, such as in the work of Jacques Derrida.

It is in Plato's *Republic*, Plato's *Laws*, and Aristotle's *Politics* that a clear, 4th century philosophical interpretation of *polyphōnia* begins to emerge. In sum, Plato and Aristotle say that *polyphōnia* causes the following three problems: first, it marks *the end of proper spectatorship, or the division between the spectacle and the spectators*; second, it is *the beginning of equal participation in cultural and political gatherings*; and, finally, ultimately, it shows *a lack of respect for the* logos*, and gives equality to bare voices without the* logos.

Ultimately, it is this final, third trait of *polyphōnia* — the refusal to stratify society on the basis of the *logos* — that is for Aristotle and Plato the most severe. *Polyphōnia* is always depicted by ancient and modern philosophers as a voice that does not express *logos*, that does not conform to the *logos*, that does not honor those with the *logos*—a bare voice that separates or splits off from proper discourse or *logos* and assembles with equals elsewhere. As we will see, what is at stake in this non-conformity to *logos* and this splitting off of *phōnē* is not merely language, but the performance of a new life and a new politics altogether.

II.

When *polyphōnia* occurs in music, says Aristotle at the close of the *Politics*, the division between the actors on the stage and the audience collapses.[53] The imaginary "fourth wall" separating professional actors and spectators is removed and the people become fellow actors on the stage. The entire hierarchy between professionals and spectators breaks down. Proper judges, actors, authors, and composers are no longer respected as "low-grade flute players… drag the choral leader around when they perform…."[54]

Aristotle's description seems to mimic the account in Plato's *Laws* and allows us to link the "event" in Plato's *Laws* to *polyphōnia* even further.[55] In addition to Plato's condemnation of *theatrocracy* in Book III of Plato's *Laws*, the entire system of education in Book II is an attempt to create a firm division between the spectator and the spectacle. As the Athenian writes, "[E]ach and every assembly and gathering for any purpose should invariably have a leader…."[56] In order to make sure our music has "order," the ones with proper order will be installed as chorus-leaders, authors, composers, judges, and educators.[57] This role of this figure is to sit "in judgment as a teacher of the audience, rather than as its pupil; his function (and under the ancient

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[53] Arist. *Pol.* 1341a37-1341b19.

[54] Arist. *Poet.* 1461b31-35. The Plutarch writes similarly: "…the flute-players, who were considered in the light of servants to the composers, [were] bound to conform scruptuously to their instructions[...]but…[after Lasos and others]…this subordination ceased." Or, as the conservative poet Pratinas puts it more obstinately, "It is for me to make the noise, like a swan leading the many-feathered song. The song is the queen appointed by the Muse, let the flute dance afterwards. For it is the servant." Cf. Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, Second Edition, Revised by T. B. L. Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 17; Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia: The Chorus, the City and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20, 130.

[55] Plato instructs that this kind of music should not be taught in the city later in the dialogue, but even there he does not give it a name such as *polyphōnia*.

[56] Pl. *Leg.* 640a.

[57] Pl. *Leg.* 653e. See Pl. *Leg.* 2.

law of the Greeks he used to be allowed to perform it) is to throw his weight *against* them…."[58]

III.

To better understand the end of spectatorship and the participatory phenomenon of *polyphōnia* in Plato's *Laws*, we might think of Rousseau's advice to d'Alembert that spectacles be replaced by festivals: "[L]et the Spectators become an Entertainment unto themselves; make them actors themselves."[59] One also thinks of Nietzsche's discussion of early tragedy as an era of art without spectatorship: "A public of spectators, as we know it, was unknown to the Greeks."[60] "[T]his is the most immediate effect of Dionysian tragedy, that state and society, indeed the whole chasm separating man from man, gives way to an overpowering feeling of unity which leads back to the heart of nature."[61] Or, in more recent times, one might think of Jacques Derrida's description of Artaud's theater: "There is no longer spectator or spectacle, but festival….The festival must be a political act. And the act of political revolution is theatrical."[62] And yet none of these philosophers connect *polyphōnia* to the birth of theatrocracy or democracy.

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[58] Pl. *Leg.* 659b.

[59] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 10, ed, trans. Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth, and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2004), 344. Jacques Derrida discusses this passage in "The Theater of Cruelty," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 245.

[60] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23..

[61] Ibid., 45.

[62] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 244-5.

IV.

What was the relationship between *polyphōnia* and democracy? Ultimately, the polyphonic theater is interpreted by ancient Greek philosophers as a revolution in poetic language. Performances of *polyphōnia* are always depicted as phonic ruptures over and against proper discourse as Plato writes, "voiceless, they began to use their voices."[63]

As we will see, the most significant word in Plato's description of the event in the theater is this word *phōnē*. Plato uses it to describe how the Athenian spectators interrupted the theater performance not with *logos*, but with their bare voices [*phōnē*] or "uncouth yelling."[64] These bare voices, which were of a lower status than aristocrats with the *logos*, joined the sounds of musicians, who likewise broke the aristocracy's laws and standards regarding music and played bare sound [*phōnē*]. In short, the birth of democracy was made possible through a kind of interruption or rupture of *phōnē*, a word that simultaneously means the bare sounds of music and the bare voice. *Phōnē* unhinged itself, slipped away from all authoritative discourse, assumed a separate existence, and performed something else altogether.

V.

The first attempt to ban *polyphōnia* in political philosophy is found in Book III of Plato's *Republic*.[65] Still, here one must remember why *polyphōnia* is ultimately expelled from Plato's *Republic*: An order between *phōnē* and *logos* is being established.

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[63] Pl. *Leg.* 701a. My translation.

[64] Pl. *Leg.* 700c.

[65] Pl. *Resp*. 399 c-e, 404e. The Plutarch, who relies on Plato's philosophy throughout his commentary, tells us that that Plato condemned *polyphōnia* in Book III of his *Republic*, banning a style of music "that introduced into their theaters and public spectacles a feeble and frittered style," or what another translation calls "an effeminate twittering" ([Plut.] *De mus.* 1136b. The first translation is that of J.H Bromby in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 39.

What is most important in the order between *phōnē* and *logos* is that *phōnē* must follow or conform to the *logos* and not the other way around.[66] In other words, melody or *phōnē* must always be the expression of *logos*. It must never slip away from *logos* or separate from it. Plato repeats this point three times in Book III as if to mark it as *absolutum dominium*.[67] He then concludes Book III by underscoring that this ordering of *logos* and *phōnē* institutes a hierarchy between the ruler and the ruled.

What is it, then, that actually inaugurates and upholds sovereignty in the city and founds a division in the democracy between those who are fit to rule and those who are not? It is a unique kind of speech (*logos*) that is distinguished from the bare voice. For Plato, this distinction is first instituted through poetry, music, and theater.

VI.

The exclusion of *polyphōnia* in 4th century philosophy is based on a fundamental distinction between *phōnē* and *logos*. The proper rulers (the police, the military, future rulers, etc.) of Plato's *Republic* are educated in a unique kind of speech (*logos*) from the time they are children[68]; the education is ultimately for the guardians[69] and ultimately

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The second translation is that of Einarson and De Lacy in the Loeb edition, 385. On manliness and musical education see Pl. *Resp*. 2-3; Arist. *Pol*. 8).

[66] Pl. *Resp*. 398d; 400d; 412b; 413e-414a.

[67] Pl. *Resp*. 398d; 400d; 412b; 413e-414a. The poetry given to the guardians must not be chosen according to its phonic and structural aspects of melody, harmony, and rhythm. Rather, each of these aspects of song are reduced to *logos* (Pl. *Resp*. 398d; 400d). As Socrates suggests, "…melody is composed of three things speech, harmonic mode, and rhythm." "And," he continues, "the harmonic mode and the rhythm must follow the speech." He then repeats the formulation twice more in the following discussion as if to underscore the importance of this order between sound or *phōnē* and *logos*: "[W]e'll compel the foot and the tune to follow the speech of such a man, rather than the speech following the foot and the tune" (Pl. *Resp*. 400a). The point is serious enough to say it a third time and even more definitively: "[R]hythm and harmonic mode follow speech…and not speech them" (Pl. *Resp*. 400d).

[68] Pl. *Resp*. 376b-d.

[69] Pl. *Resp*. 398b.

based on *logos*.[70] In the end, those who show themselves to possess this speech or *logos* will be "appointed ruler of the city and guardian…given honors, both while living and when dead, and…allotted the greatest prizes in burial and the other memorials."[71]

The problem of *polyphōnia*, as Plato tells us in Book III of the *Republic*, is that it disrupts the proper order between *logos* and *phōnē* entirely because in *polyphōnia*, *phōnē* does not conform to *logos*, but assumes a separate existence altogether. *Polyphōnia* is, in fact, a rupture in the order of discourse: it is an instance or event in which sound detaches itself or separates itself from discourse so that sound becomes errant noise — disquieting *noise* that no longer has any relationship to the *logos*.

This division is historical. It is as true for Aristotle as it is for Plato. When Aristotle calls the polyphonic flute "orgiastic" in Book VIII of the *Politics*, he blames it for preventing "the use of the logos."[72] When he uses the word *polyphōnia* in *Parts of Animals*, he attributes it to an *animal's mouth*, which is capable of *voice* (*phōnē*) *but not speech* (*logos*), and distinguishes this from the human mouth, which exists ultimately *as a means for the logos*.[73] Likewise, when Aristotle's *Politics* concludes with a warning against *polyphōnia* in music, he distinguishes between the word *phōnē*, or the bare voice, and voices without proper political speech, or *logos*.[74] And when Aristotle refers to Plato's discussion of education at the opening of the *Poetics*, Aristotle tells us that

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[70] Pl. *Resp*. 398d; 400d.

[71] Pl. *Resp*. 413e-414a. "If a man appears hard to bewitch and graceful in everything, a good guardian of himself and the music he was learning, proving himself to possess rhythm and harmony [both of which are based on the *logos*, *Resp.* 400d] on all these occasions — such a man would certainly be most useful to himself and the city. And the one who on each occasion…is tested and comes through untainted, must be appointed ruler of the city and guardian…," *Resp.* 413d.

[72] Arist. *Pol*. 1341a25.

[73] *PA* 660b4-6; *PA* 659b30-660a34. Aristotle uses *polyphōnia* to describe the many notes of a bird's song (*PA* 660a34).

[74] Arist. *Pol*. 1253a10-18. Cf. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 34.

although this sort of flute-playing and lyre-playing use rhythm and harmony, they are not "the art that uses *logos*."[75]

The kind of poetry and politics that Plato and Aristotle want to preclude is one in which bare voices or *phōnē* are included as equals. *Polyphōnia* refuses to give honors or distinctions to those with the *logos* and obey them; it breaks with the order of aristocracy, mimetic education, and reverent spectatorship altogether. But *polyphōnia* does not stop with revolt or deconstruction. It performs a new egalitarian assembly elsewhere. After deconstructing the *archē* of the city, it performs an independent, alternate festival or assembly with others. This is why, for Plato, an errant note on the flute amounts to a full-scale revolution of bare voices.

VII.

In his genealogy of 5th and 4th century Athens, Michel Foucault advises us to interpret the distinction between *logos* and *phōnē* within its historical context. The 4th century philosophy of language was no accident, according to Foucault. As Foucault writes, "[T]rue discourse introduces something completely different and irreducible to the egalitarian structure of democracy."[76] Although everybody can speak (i.e. *isēgoria*), democracy in the late 5th century becomes "indexed to the *logos* of truth" and "only a few can tell the truth."[77] "[O]nce only a few can tell the truth," Foucault continues, "a difference is produced [in the field of democracy] which is that of the ascendancy exercised by some over others."[78] In a democracy in which every citizen had an equal voice in politics, it was the emergence of true discourse, that is, *logos*, which re-

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[75] Arist. *Poet.* 1447a20-1447b1. Translation from *Aristotle's Poetics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2006). Translation modified.

[76] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 184, 200; Pl. *Resp*. 3.

[77] Ibid.,174, 183-4

[78] Ibid.

introduced the hierarchy between the proper ruler and the ruled, between the leaders and the masses, between the aristocracy and the democrats. *Logos* is what "make[s] possible the proper direction of the city through the exercise of ascendancy…" the recognition of those fit for rule.[79]

If the *logos* for Plato and Aristotle is a mimetic discourse that disciplines the best and stratifies the city, *polyphōnia* is a revolt from this division in language entirely. Alone, this slippage of *phōnē* in the event of *polyphōnia* is a bare voice that does not conform to *logos* or to the *logos*-based *harmonia*. But as a collective enunciation, these bare voices perform a polyphony of disquiet that creates a fissure or opening in the city's *archē* that crucial cornerstone of Plato's *Republic* that founds the city's sovereignty and origin at once, and depends on the *logos* for its construction.[80]

This rupture in language is synonymous with participatory democracy. Like *polyphōnia*, democracy disturbs the order of discourse at its first principle, that is, at the place of *archē* itself. As Plato says, in a democracy, "True speech" (*logos*) is no longer admitted, no longer honored or even "let into the guardhouse."[81] This makes the city "anarchic" (*anarchos*) or without an *archē*.[82] *Polyphōnia* goes beyond the deconstruction of the *archē* into a kind of rebuilding elsewhere: it performs an assembly of bare voices without leaders. The democrats "share the regime and the ruling offices (*archōn*)…on an equal basis…and, for the most part…by lot."[83]

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[79] Ibid. 200.

[80] Pl. *Resp.* 369c.

[81] Pl. *Resp*. 560d; 561b.

[82] Pl. *Resp*. 558c; 560e; 562e.

[83] Pl. *Resp*. 557a. Likewise in the *Laws*, the democrats "refused to submit to the authorities" and set "the ordinary man…up as a capable judge," Pl. *Leg.* 700e-701b.

VIII.

In the end, it is forbidden to study *polyphōnia* in Plato's aristocracy in the *Laws*. The leader or "official in charge of education" is tasked with forbidding *polyphōnia* that is, with forbidding any *phōnē* that does not conform to the narrative being sung. As Plato writes:

> …each string…must produce notes that are identical in pitch to the words being sung. The lyre should not be used to play an elaborate independent melody: that is, its strings must produce no notes except those of the composer of the melody being played; small intervals should not be combined with large, nor quick tempo with slow, nor low notes with high. Similarly, the rhythms of the music of the lyre must not be tricked out with all sorts of frills and adornments. All this sort of thing must be kept from students.… [A]ll these musical matters should be controlled, according to his brief, by our official in charge of education.…[84]

The theater is responsible for assimilating music to the master narrative of the city. Leaders are instituted to ensure that *phōnē* will follow the *logos* and remain fixed to it. Melodies or *phōnē* that do not conform to the *logos* "must be kept from students" and "controlled." This is always done by the same method: instituting a division in the fourth wall: the best, or those with *logos*, become the principle actors on the stage, while those without the *logos* watch the order and follow the spectacle lockstep.

[84] Pl. *Leg.* 812d-e.

Part III: "Officers of the Sovereign"

I.

The exceptional speech that is instituted in fourth-century philosophy at the exclusion of the bare voice is extended to the figure of the legislator in Plato's later political thought and in Aristotle's ethical and political thought. It is then reinstituted in the figure of the legislator and what Rousseau calls the representatives or "officers of the sovereign" in the modern Republic. From Plato's *Laws* to Aristotle's *Politics* to Rousseau's *Social Contract*, the ones with exceptional speech are named legislators and representatives and given the sovereign power to found law.

Plato's *Laws* envisions an aristocracy where those with *logos* would be installed as proper leaders or representatives of the people. As Plato writes:

> At any rate the next and necessary step…is to choose some representatives to review the rules of all the families, and to propose openly to the leaders and heads of people the "kings," so to speak the adoption of those rules that particularly recommend themselves for common use. These representatives will be known as the lawgivers, and by appointing the leaders as officials they will create out of the separate autocracies a sort of aristocracy, or perhaps kingship.[85]

Likewise, although Rousseau initially describes sovereignty or the general will as being composed of "as many members as there are voices in the assembly,"[86] Rousseau later describes the need for a "guide" for the "blind multitude," an "organ to enunciate its will," an "extraordinary man" to "pronounce" its will for it.[87] The role of the sovereign legislator from Plato to Rousseau is based on exceptional speech.

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[85] Arist. *Pol*. 681c-e.
[86] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 139.
[87] Ibid., 154.

II.

Where did modern representation begin? What was its initial logic? And how was this logic performed as if it were a dramatic action in the theater?

In 1761, in the year that Rousseau publishes the *Social Contract*, the 4th century philosophical notion of *polyphōnia* as the separation of sound or *phōnē* from proper discourse and its collective enunciation elsewhere surfaces in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. Before *polyphōnia* in music, according to Rousseau, there existed a twofold voice of nature in which melody and speech went hand in hand to create a sonorous, holy voice. The event of *polyphōnia* brought about the separation of melody from discourse so that, in the end, sound assumed an independent or separate existence apart from discourse.

Rousseau actually cites the Plutarch's genealogy of *polyphōnia* as the event that led to the separation of melody and speech. Rousseau then explains in his genealogy of language, the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, how through the poetry of Melanippides and others, music became independent of the words but, far more than this, how bare sound separated itself from proper discourse and performed something else entirely. The event of polyphony was a degeneration, Rousseau says. It had the effect of creating voices that were devoid of melody voices that Rousseau refers to later as "noise."[88] Citing the Plutarch's discussion of *polyphōnia*, Rousseau writes:

> From the time of Melanippides and Philoxenus, instrument players who were at first the employers of the Poets and worked only under them and, so to speak, at their dictation became independent of them, and it is of this license that Music complains so bitterly in the Comedy by Pherectrates, a passage of which Plutarch has preserved for us. Thus melody, beginning to no longer be so attached to discourse, imperceptibly assumed a separate existence, and music became more independent of the words. That was also when the wonders that it had produced when it was only the accent and the

[88] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7, ed., trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England, 1998), 330.

> harmony of poetry gradually ceased, and when it gave to poetry that dominion over the passions which speech has since exercised only over reason.[89]

III.

Despite Rousseau's disgust for Plato, Rousseau's hatred for *polyphōnia* is as vehement as Plato's as he describes the degeneration of language and politics as *polyphōnia* itself. But Rousseau's rebuke is not only an extension of Plato's aesthetic or linguistic interpretation of *polyphōnia*. Rousseau, perhaps the most celebrated philosopher of modern, social contract democracy, goes on to describe *polyphōnia*, or the separation of sound from discourse, as what ended authentic assembly.[90]

But what kind of authentic assembly would Rousseau's be? In the passages surrounding the discussion of *polyphōnia* in the *Essay*, Rousseau's assembly relies on certain people having "eloquence" "discourses…to deliver to the assembled people," but not to be spoken out by the masses themselves.[91] Unlike the egalitarian tone of *polyphōnia*, the discourse of the assembly elevates and glorifies in "the tone with which [Greece] had sung of its Heroes."[92] In fact, throughout the *Essay*, the original, twofold, pre-polyphonic, holy voice of nature that defines authentic assembly is distinct from other, degenerate, marginal forms of the voice such as "animals,"[93] the "barbarians" and the "unlearned,"[94] the "crude men" of the north,[95] poets after Homer,[96] the Polish,[97] those with weak organs,[98] and so on.

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[89] Ibid., 329.
[90] Ibid., 332.
[91] Ibid., 331, 332.
[92] Ibid., 329.
[93] Ibid., 289.
[94] Ibid., 330.
[95] Ibid., 330.
[96] Ibid., 301.
[97] Ibid., 304.
[98] Ibid., 315.

And thus Rousseau's assembly is a place for *discourse* but not for what Rousseau calls *noise*. Like Plato and Aristotle, Rousseau does not avoid the political hierarchy that this distinction in language establishes. The criticisms of polyphony are published in the same year as Rousseau's *Social Contract*, a text in which the common people depend on legislators who possess pure, holy voices and the "officers of the sovereign" who imitate their speech. These holy, twofold voices persuade those with bare voices towards what is best for them: they submit to the social contract, and above all, to a form of sovereignty and representation.[99]

This particular notion of sovereignty and representation one that is based on one's ability in language is not only common to Plato's late political philosophy and to Aristotle. It is typical for the historical *epistēmē* in which Rousseau is writing, and it is a blueprint for the "mixed" or "moderate" government of the French and American revolutions in which aristocrats founded a peoples' constitution for them. Finally, guarantees for "freedom of speech" will not include the assembly of bare voices in public space. As John Stuart Mill writes against these voices in *On Liberty*: "An opinion that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor, or that private property is robbery, ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the press, but may justly incur punishment delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer, or when handed about among the same mob in the form of a placard."[100]

[99] See, for instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 156-7. "[T]he Legislator…must necessarily have recourse to another order of authority…. It is this sublime reason, which rises above the grasp of common men, whose decisions the legislator places in the mouth of the immortals in order to win over by divine authority those who cannot be moved by human prudence. But it is not every man who can make the Gods speak or be believed when he declares himself their interpreter. The Legislator's great soul is the true miracle that should prove his mission."

[100] J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, 39-40.

IV.

But where did modern sovereignty and representation begin? Did Rousseau's rejection of *polyphōnia* — as the degeneration of language and authentic or free political assembly — exalt some and exclude others in the modern Republic at a most fundamental root? Did it provide the basis for political representation — for those with exceptional speech to be our "officers of the sovereign"? In short, have we inherited a 4th century division between the *voice* and *logos* in terms of a modern democratic assembly? Does this preclude the possibility of a truly free speech that does not conform to the discourse of the sovereign? If so, how would we begin to think of democracy otherwise?

Part IV: How to Perform a Democracy

I.

Beyond a few lines of text, there is a remarkable silence surrounding *polyphōnia* in Western thought. But perhaps this silence is like the long, dark pauses in the flashes of a lighthouse that mark a way to the next signpost. As each philosopher attempts to silence *polyphōnia*, they inform us of it in the most interesting way: we discover their deep hatred for it. This hatred is manifest in particular in Plato's *Republic* and the *Laws*, in Aristotle's *Politics*, in the Plutarch's commentary, *On Music*, and in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* all texts which impose a certain distinction and order of language onto the ruled.

Beyond the 4th century Athenian hatred of *polyphōnia* in music, Western interest in *polyphōnia* is difficult to discern after the Greeks. It is not at all clear that the polyphonic music of the Renaissance is based on the Greek experience of *polyphōnia*.[101] In addition, although some German Romantics appear to celebrate this aesthetics in an interesting form, the fragment,[102] the Romantics mistook the political practice of *polyphōnia* for a metaphysics of nature, thus continuing, albeit overturning, the initial binary inaugurated by Plato.[103] Even Mikhail Bakhin's twentieth-century

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[101] Curt Sachs, "Counterpoint?," in *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World East and West* (New York: Norton, 1943), 256-258.

[102] See, for instance, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Random House, 1956), 46: "The cosmic symbolism of music resists any adequate treatment by language…. Whenever it engages in the imitation of music, language remains in purely superficial contact with it…." Cf. 113: "To the listener who desires to hear the words above the music corresponds the singer who speaks more than he sings…. By this emphasis he aids the understanding of the words and gets rid of the remaining half of music."

[103] Ibid., 47: Nietzsche writes that we must "[disregard] the current explanations of [the chorus] as…representing the populace over against the noble realm of the set. The latter interpretation, which sounds so grandly edifying to certain politicians (as though the democratic Athenians had represented in the popular chorus the invariable moral law, always right in the face of the passionate misdeeds and extravagances of kings) may have been suggested by a phrase in Aristotle, but this lofty notion can have no influence whatever on the original formation of tragedy, whose purely religious origins would exclude not only the

notion of *polyphony* in the novel does not at all describe the public, performative, and political experience of *polyphōnia*. It is, after all, a theory of the written novel and not a discussion of public theater or the polyphonic, Athenian festival.

II.

We do find a remarkable rethinking of both *polyphōnia* and democracy in the 1960s in France, however. This movement is also the only broad movement in Western philosophy where philosophy takes the side of *polyphōnia* and does not later attach the bare voice to a metaphysics of nature, subjectivity, or Being.

By 1965, Jacques Lacan describes the slip of enunciation in the *Écrits* as an unconscious *phōnēme* that appears in a *polyphony* of language.[104] And with the publication of Jacques Lacan's *Écrits* and Michel Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*, or later with Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, French philosophy develops a notion of enunciation from without of proper political discourse and the bourgeois individual.[105]

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opposition between the people and their rulers but any kind of political or social context. Likewise we would consider it blasphemous, in the light of the classical form of the chorus as we knot it from Aeschylus and Sophocles, to speak of a 'foreshadowing' of constitutional democracy, though others have not stuck at such blasphemy. No ancient polity ever embodied constitutional democracy, and one dares to hope that ancient tragedy did not even foreshadow it." Nietzsche is likely commenting on the following passage from Aristotle's *Poetics*: "…the Dorians take credit for both tragedy and comedy (for the Megarians there take credit for comedy as having come into being at the time of their democracy, as do the Megarians in Sicily, since Epicharmus the poet was from there, being much earlier than Chionides and Magnes, and some of those in the Peloponnese take credit for tragedy). They make the names a sign of this, for they say they call their rural villages *cōmai* while the Athenians call them *dēmoi*…." (Arist. *Poet.* 1448a30-38, Sachs translation).

[104] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink, in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 146. Lacan also places a chart at the end of the *Écrits* suggesting that the result of psychoanalysis is to shift oneself away from conscious language towards one's unconscious voice.

[105] By 1983, in addition to Foucault's ongoing lectures on exceptional speech in 5th and 4th century Athens, we find a brief discussion of the event of "theatrocracy" in Plato's *Laws*.

During this time, there is also a resurgence of interest in direct Athenian democracy in France. Although none of these works to our knowledge discuss the Athenian practice of *polyphōnia*, this new current of French philosophy finds its way at a time when, as Todd May has argued, part of French philosophy's project is to support a growing anarchic or democratic movement.[106] As Cornelius Castoriadis writes, if there is a new motto for the citizen at this time, it is that "no one else can do the job for it."[107] Workers themselves must "abolish all fixed and stable distinctions" and "organize management on a collective basis."[108] This new project of anarchic democracy culminates in the event of May '68 in France, which marked by a public shift on the left toward the deconstruction of inequality, hierarchy, and sovereignty. As Jean-Luc Nancy describes it, '68 was a democratic "irruption or disruption," but one that introduced "no new figure, agency, or authority."[109]

III.

Jacques Derrida's 1967 critique of Rousseau perhaps constitutes the most extensive rethinking of *polyphōnia* in modern thought. The second half of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* focuses on Rousseau's discussion of *polyphōnia* — seemingly without knowing of its Greek history — as the separation between song and speech that Rousseau says is responsible for the so-called degeneration of language and politics.[110]

Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, trans. John Drury, Corinne, Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 45-7.

[106] Todd May, "Is post-structuralist political theory anarchist?," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 15 (2):167-182 (1989).

[107] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings, Vol. 1, 1946-1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism*, ed., trans. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 103.

[108] Ibid., 102.

[109] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 14.

[110] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 199.

Derrida's text for us marks the first serious, historical critique of the 4th century philosophical interpretation of *polyphōnia* specifically.

Derrida focuses on the event of *polyphōnia* as the so-called departure of politics from its pure origin or *archē* in Rousseau's *Essay*. But Derrida attempts to shatter the idea of this pure origin or *archē* altogether — a notion that is always already at odds with participatory democracy in Athens, as Plato and Herodotus tell us.[111]

As Derrida writes, "The history that follows the origin…is nothing but the story of the separation between song and speech."[112] But "it must be said," he continues, that "this history had no prehistory. Degeneration as separation, severing of voice and song, has always already begun."[113] "[S]ong and speech…had…always already begun to separate themselves."[114] This pure *beginning* or *archē* had always already involved a "difference which fractured the origin."[115]

The text of *Of Grammatology* opens up the fissure of *polyphōnia* by deconstructing the *archē* that sutured it. This split between *phōnē* and discourse is not only opened up, but celebrated.

IV.

What is so remarkable about Derrida's text is that Derrida does not appear to follow Rousseau's citation of the Plutarch's passage on *polyphōnia*. He certainly does not to connect it with the early practice of direct democracy or the bare voice. Instead, he claims that the polyphonic split between song and speech always "has the form of

[111] Pl. *Resp.* 556c; *Pl. Resp.* 558c. The city first plummets into democracy, says Plato, when the "rulers and the ruled…come alongside each other" so that the city is eventually "anarchic" or "without rulers" (*anarchos*), offering "equality to equals and unequals alike." This definition of democracy as a city "without rulers" (*anarchos*) recalls other Greeks such as Herodotus, for example, who wrote that equality was the "wish neither to rule nor to be ruled" (Hdt. 3.83).

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

writing."[116] Yet just as Rousseau's text "says something without wishing to say it" that Rousseau's text, in a sense, makes a slip so too the pages of Derrida's famous critique of the voice hint at a very different kind of voice without wishing to say it.

At one point, Derrida presents this anomaly to readers of the chapter on *polyphōnia* in Rousseau's *Essay*: "*It is in the context of this possibility that one must pose the problem of the cry—of that which one has always excluded, pushing it into the area of animality or of madness, like the myth of the inarticulate cry—and the problem of speech (voice) within the history of life*."[117] Derrida does not consider this question himself. He only writes that this question of the bare voice must be posed. Perhaps it can only be taken up after a thorough critique of the voice as the expression of *logos*.

V.

As Mladen Dolar has written:

> The most convincing part of Derrida's extensive analyses is his ability to demonstrate how a seemingly marginal theme that of the primacy of voice over writing, the phonocentric bias consistently occurs throughout the whole history of metaphysics, and how it is inherently and necessarily linked with all major metaphysical preoccupations….Yet the phonocentric bias may not be the whole story of the metaphysical treatment of the voice. There exists a different metaphysical history of the voice, where the voice, far from being the safeguard of presence, was considered to be dangerous, threatening, and possibly ruinous….Not just writing, but also the voice can appear as a menace to metaphysical consistency, and can be seen as disruptive of presence and sense.[118]

What then of the polyphony of voice? The bare voice? The voice that has separated itself from the *logos* and assumed a separate existence? Although the text of *Of Grammatology* does not investigate these questions, it opens up the fissure of *polyphōnia* in modern thought, and simultaneously rediscovers the possibility of a bare voice "within the history of life." To be sure, this voice and this politics could never be

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 166. Italics mine.

[118] Dolar, Mladen, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2006), 42-3.

reduced to *logos* and falls outside of the history of *phonocentrism*. It is a voice from elsewhere – a voice in the margins, and here Derrida is all too aware that these margins are excluded from the *archē* of the modern democratic assembly. One could even say that Derrida's rediscovery of the fissure of *polyphōnia* coincides with a thinking of the margins of Rousseau's assembly; it is one text among many during this period that reopen the gap or space between the modern republic and democracy.

VI.

How do we perform a democracy? How do we choreograph it as if it were an action on the stage in the theater?

VII.

In his essay, "The Theater of Cruelty," Derrida comments on Rousseau once more – this time on Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater*. Derrida is attempting to describe a historical, specifically 1960s mode of performance[119] that he attributes to the earlier work of Artaud.[120] Derrida writes that at one point in Rousseau's letter on the theater, Rousseau suggests something similar to the work of Artaud: "[Rousseau] proposes the replacement of theatrical representations with public festivals lacking all exhibition and spectacle, festivals without 'anything to see' in which the spectators themselves become actors."[121] Derrida then cites Rousseau's recommendation to d'Alembert in the *Letter*:

[119] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 233: "If throughout the world today," Derrida writes, "all theatrical audacity declares its fidelity to Artaud…then the question of the theater of cruelty, of its present inexistence and its implacable necessity, has the value of a *historic* question."

[120] Ibid., 245.

[121] Ibid.

> Plant a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the Spectators become an Entertainment unto themselves; make them actors themselves.[122]

Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater* concludes by proposing public festivals as an alternative to spectacles or spectatorship. It is almost as though he briefly endorses the *polyphōnia* of Plato's *Laws* at which spectators become actors. Derrida will say that this was a precursor to a specifically 1960s mode of performance art.

In this new mode of performance, there is no division between the "representer" and the "represented" because "[t]here is no longer spectator or spectacle, but *festival*."[123] "Within the space of the festival opened up by transgression, the distance of representation should no longer be extendable."[124] In addition, here Derrida critiques the "text" for the consideration of a "new language" or a "new sense."[125] As Derrida writes, "It is less a question of constructing a mute stage than of constructing a stage whose clamour has not yet been pacified into words."[126]

Derrida seems to be outlining the theatrocracy of bare voices in Plato's *Laws*, writing: "The festival must be a political *act*. And the act of political revolution is *theatrical*."[127]

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[122] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 10, ed, trans. Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth, and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2004), 344, as quoted by Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 245.

[123] Ibid., 244, 245.

[124] Ibid., 244.

[125] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 240.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 245.

VIII.

This is the sort of map that this work sets out to chart. It would be something like a genealogy as Nietzsche describes it, following the descriptions of *polyphōnia*, presuming no stable or *a priori* concept of the word, and finding within the word itself a fragmented description of bare voices and participatory democracy. Through *polyphōnia*, democracy is presented to us not as a definition, but rather as a genealogy of performances or choreographies. Plato and Aristotle's image of *polyphōnia* evokes rows of empty chairs in the theater. Everyone has left their seats. The spectators have become actors in the theater of democracy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE THEATER OF DEMOCRACY

…they gave the ordinary man not only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge. The spectators, once silent, began to use their voices; they claimed to know what was good and bad in music, and instead of a "musical aristocracy," a sort of vicious "theatrocracy" arose. But if this democracy had been limited to gentlemen and had applied only in music, no great harm would have been done; in the event, however, music proved to be the starting point of everyone's conviction that he was an authority on everything, and of a general disregard for the law…. The conviction that they *knew* made them unafraid, and assurance engendered effrontery.

Plato, *Laws*[128]

…the Dorians take credit for both tragedy and comedy (for the Megarians there take credit for comedy as having come into being at the time of their democracy, as do the Megarians in Sicily, since Epicharmus the poet was from there, being much earlier than Chionides and Magnes, and some of those in the Peloponnese take credit for tragedy). They make the names a sign of this, for they say they call their rural villages *cōmai* while the Athenians call them *dēmoi*….

Aristotle, *Poetics*[129]

[Disregard] the current explanations of [the chorus] as…representing the populace over against the noble realm of the set. [This] interpretation, which sounds so grandly edifying to certain politicians (as though the democratic Athenians had represented in the popular chorus the invariable moral law, always right in the face of the passionate misdeeds and extravagances of kings) may have been suggested by a phrase in Aristotle, but this lofty notion can have no influence whatever on the original formation of tragedy, whose purely religious origins would exclude not only the opposition between the people and their rulers but any kind of political or social context. Likewise we would consider it blasphemous, in the light of the classical form of the chorus as we knot it from Aeschylus and Sophocles, to speak of a 'foreshadowing' of constitutional democracy, though others have not stuck at such blasphemy. No ancient polity ever embodied constitutional democracy, and one dares to hope that ancient tragedy did not even foreshadow it.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*[130]

[128] Pl. *Leg*. 700e-701b. Translation modified.

[129] Arist. *Poet.* 1448a30-38. Sachs translation.

[130] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Random House, 1956), 47.

Part I: A Genealogy of Democracy

1. On the Name "Democracy"[131]

> Who then, can take it upon him- or herself, and with what means, to speak…of democracy *itself*…when it is precisely the concept of democracy *itself*, in its univocal and proper meaning, that is presently and forever lacking?
>
> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*[132]

We are the inheritors of a word that is anything but simple to define. Our mere acceptance of it will be for some a prized statue and for others a pregnant Trojan Horse already in our midst. Just as "the train to New York" may refer to the 8:25 train or the 10:25 train, the train that travels south from Providence or north through Baltimore, so too the name "democracy" is invoked today to refer to campaigns as vastly different as direct democracies and global neoliberal institutions.

The arbitrariness of the word "democracy" — the uncertainty of its meaning, the semantic slippage — is far from a contemporary or even a so-called "postmodern"

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[131] For contemporary literature on the shifting notion of the "name" of democracy, see "As for the Name…It Is Called a Democracy," in Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Zone Books, 2006 [1981]), 219-278; Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005 [2003]), 8-9, 32, 89-91; Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 2005), 55, 95, 103-4, 305-6; Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 37-41, on the senses of the word "democracy"; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 232; Alain Badiou, "L'emblème démocratique" in *Démocratie, dans quel état*? (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2009), 15-25.

[132] Derrida, *Rogues*, 34.

phenomenon.[133] In fact, there has never been a universal definition of the term. The word "democracy" has always been unusually open to various and often conflicting meanings, meanings that could slide easily beneath a polyphonic signifier for rhetorical and political strategies.

This uncertainty surrounding the name "democracy" has never impeded the popularity of the word from ancient to contemporary times. The name had become so popular in Athens by the 4th Century that nearly every recorded Athenian orator claimed to stand on the side of it, even though their proposals rarely if ever defended democratic practice.[134] Likewise, under the auspices of the name "democracy," dictators would come to power in the twentieth century; colonial powers would interrupt local democratic elections in order to promote and preserve "democracy"[135]; the world would be divided into a binary war between communism and "democracy,"[136] echoing the Greek binary wars that had preceded it[137]; nations would be invaded on the premise of spreading "democracy"; a street vendor in Tunisia would

[133] See, for instance, Bertlinde Laniel, *Le Mot Democracy aux États-Unis de 1780 à 1856* (Presses Universitaires de Saint-Étiennes, 1995). As Laniel showed, even in a study of the word "democracy" from 1780 to 1856 in the United States, there is no stable meaning that can be attached to the word.

[134] Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 261. One rhetor, for example, claimed to have improved democracy by imposing a plutocracy on the people.

[135] See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, 33. Here Derrida writes on the suspension of the electoral process in Algeria: "they decided in a sovereign fashion to suspend, at least provisionally, democracy for its own good, so as to take care of it…."

[136] On the name "democracy" in relation to the cold war, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 232.

[137] Nicole Loraux, in *The Invention of Athens*, 257-59: "the ideological struggle between Sparta and Athens ultimately prevented the constitution of a democratic doctrine that was…not merely polemical and defensive," 259. Professional rhetoricians and politicians, for instance, offered the people simple, binary choices like "Democracy, not tyranny!," "Athens, not Sparta." Yet these imaginary oppositions resulted in the lack of any real and positive practice of democracy.

set himself on fire and bring about democracy; and people around the world would "occupy."[138]

The name "democracy" has always been up for grabs. But as the scholar M.I. Finley writes, while elite orators attempted to define democracy and the early philosophers simply "attacked democracy," "the committed democrats responded…by going about the business of government and politics in a democratic way, without writing treatises on the subject."[139] As Jennifer Robinson puts it elsewhere, the first democrats in Athens were "less concerned with the sober prose of historians and philosophers" and more concerned with media, culture, and democratic practice.[140] Democracy's story, in other words, began with citizens who were caught up by the question of *how to perform it* — how to choreograph it as if it were an action on the stage in the theater.

II. A Politics of the Event

One of the most remarkable early accounts of democracy is found in Book III of Plato's *Laws*. There, an unnamed Athenian inquires into the birth of "unfettered," direct democracy in Athens. There is little "Platonism" in this discussion, however.

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[138] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, 232: "The term *democracy* thus had little to do with the nature of government: any state…could be labeled 'democratic' regardless of how democratic it really was.…The crisis of democracy today has to do not only with the corruption and insufficiency of its institutions and practices but also with the concept itself. Part of the crisis is that it is not clear what democracy means in a globalized world." Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues,* 33-4: This freedom in the concept of democracy means that we have to consider "fascist and Nazi totalitarianisms that came into power or ascended to power …through democratic electoral processes…the plebs…the demagogy of the leader, *Führer*, or *Duce* — as well as questions regarding…representative democracy, the referendum, elections with direct, universal suffrage, and so on."

[139] Moses I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 28.

[140] Jennifer Roberts, "The Creation of a Legacy: A Manufactured Crisis in Eighteenth-Century Thought," in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (1994): 84-5.

Plato does not give an account or *logos* of democracy or define it with *a priori* principles as he does elsewhere.[141] He proposes instead to study events or changes throughout ancient political history — to study the time of irruptions, or the time of *kairos* rather than *chronos*.

In order to understand a political system such as democracy, says the Athenian, we would need to study how it "first came into existence."[142] To do this, we would have to take a "long period of time and study the changes that occur in it," and if we could "pin down just why these changes took place," perhaps we could hope to "discover how the various systems took root and developed."[143]

The Athenian describes the method of inquiry known to philosophers like Nietzsche, Foucault, or Agamben as a *genealogy*. Philosophy, in this case, would not be dependent on first principles, underlying forms, or even norms. It would be a study of the birth and transformations within a word such as "democracy."

The Athenian uses the verb *gignomai* often to describe his study — a verb that means "to be born," "to bring something into existence," "to come into a new state of being."[144] What he wishes to consider in particular is the revolutionary event that gave birth to the political constitution or name "democracy."[145]

III. A Genealogy of Democracy

The Athenian's genealogy is quite unlike any other ancient account of Athens' democratic revolution. It tells us that democracy was first born out in the city's

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[141] In Book VIII of Plato's *Republic* at 544c, Plato says that to give an account or *logos* of a constitution is (1) to define a political system abstractly and apart from all its particular details; (2) to begin with one of the "names" in which the "idea of a regime…fits into some distinct form"; and (3), as Plato's word *hupograpsanta* (literally, to "trace" or "write over," LSJ 1877) and Plato's craft suggests, it is an attempt to provide a written account, to think politics in connection with writing, to make physical in writing the idea or form of a regime.

[142] Pl. *Leg*. 676a-b.

[143] Pl. *Leg*. 676a-c.

[144] LSJ 340-341.

[145] Pl. *Leg*. 699e.

theater. Originally, says the Athenian, "there were strict regulations about music" in our theater structural "nomes" (*nomoi*), laws, or categories of music.[146] And "once these categories and a number of others had been fixed, no one was allowed to pervert them by using one sort of tune in a composition belonging to another category."[147] This imposed order on music meant that the "multitude of citizens" "were not in control";[148] the spectators "would listen to the performance with silent attention right through to the end" or else "be disciplined or controlled by a stick."[149]

But sometime later in Athens, an event that the Athenian calls a democracy of *mousikē* occurred.[150] Composers and musicians broke the laws concerning music.[151] They began to play music that departed from the approved modes or harmonic scales. And somehow this music soon altered the role of the audience: the silent spectators began to participate.

The musicians' notes rang out up the concentric rings of Athens' theater like a contagious riot of disquiet. The spectators (*theatra*), once silent (*aphōnos*), "became vocal" or began to use their voices (*phōnēeis*).[152] They began to show approval or disapproval with applause or "catcalls and uncouth yelling."[153] This "gave the ordinary man not only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge."[154] As spectators assumed the role of participants and judges, the practices of equality, community, and participation took root. Instead of a musical

[146] Pl. *Leg*. 700a.
[147] Pl. *Leg*. 700b.
[148] Pl. *Leg*. 700a-d.
[149] Pl. *Leg*. 701c-d.
[150] Pl. *Leg*. 700e-701a. The Greek word *mousikē* refers not only to music, but also to poetry, singing, theater, and dance simultaneously. In other words, the word may be used to describe the entirety of performance art in the theater.
[151] Pl. *Leg*. 700d.
[152] LSJ 1967.
[153] Pl. *Leg*. 701c.
[154] Pl. *Leg*. 700e.

aristocracy (*aristokratia*), a vicious "theatrocracy" (*theatrokratia*) arose in which rule was exercised collectively by the spectators in the theater.[155]

This rupture of notes and voices in the theater first amounted to perforations in the fourth wall of the theater. But soon this democracy in the theater amounted to a revolution in Athenian politics itself.

It is remarkable that the Athenian uses the words "theatrocracy" and "democracy" interchangeably throughout his account.[156] As the Athenian puts it, "…if this democracy (*dēmokratia*) had…only applied to music, no great harm would have been done; in the event, however, music proved to be the starting point of everyone's conviction that he was an authority on everything, and of a general disregard for the law. Complete freedom (*eleutheria*) was not far behind[...]people [grew] unwilling to submit to the authorities…."[157]

III. The Suspension of Democracy, or Aristocracy

Something is out of place. Something seems disjointed in the Athenian's history. It begins about thirty years *after* what is usually considered to be the first democratic revolution in Athens of 508/7 BCE. This means that the Athenian does not locate the birth of direct or leaderless democracy in Athens within the first democratic revolution in Athens, but rather sets its beginnings in a later, *second* democratic revolution in Athens from aristocracy to direct democracy. Thus Plato will call the event in the theater a revolution from aristocracy (*aristokratia*) to "theatrocracy" (*theatrokratia*) and "unfettered" democracy (*dēmokratia*).[158] But what actual event is Plato talking about? What event of theatrocracy in the theater is he referring to?

[155] Pl. *Leg*. 701a.
[156] Pl. *Leg*. 701a.
[157] Pl. *Leg*. 701b.
[158] Pl. *Leg*. 701a.

Plato's Athenian sets the birth of participatory democracy within a period when Athens' democracy had been suspended by an aristocracy. For the Athenian, an advocate for a "moderate" democracy or aristocracy, the aristocratic period represented a return to a better, older, pre-democratic constitution or what he often calls an "ancient code of laws."[159] Thus he begins his genealogy by praising the aristocracy that governed Athens after the Battle of Salamis (c. 480 BCE).[160] Like Plato, Aristotle discusses the period after the Battle of Salamis as a time of excellence, modesty, and integrity.[161] It was, in fact, an example of precisely the kind of "mixed" government that the *Laws* as a whole was attempting to form a "mixed" or aristocratic government between a monarchy and democracy. As the Athenian says in the *Laws*, "A system of selection like that will effect a compromise between a monarchical and a democratic constitution, which is precisely the sort of compromise a constitution should always be."[162]

Yet this aristocratic period is described vividly in Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* as the period in Athens when democracy was forcefully replaced by an aristocracy. "Up to this epoch," writes Aristotle, "the growth of the state in power was accompanied step by step by a corresponding growth of its democratic character."[163] "But after the Median war," he continues, an elite council known as the Areopagus "recovered strength and ruled the state…because the aristocratic party had the credit of the victory at Salamis."[164] As a result, the people were replaced by "leaders of the people."[165]

In Plato's *Laws*, then, the musical event to which the Athenian refers is presumably set in Athens during this reign after "the Battle of Salamis" (c. 480 BCE).

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[159] Pl. *Leg*. 698c, 699c.

[160] Pl. *Leg*. 698b-699c.

[161] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23, 25.

[162] Pl. *Leg*. 756e. This is also why, in Plato's *Laws*, "each and every assembly and gathering for any purpose whatsoever should invariably have a leader…," Pl. *Leg.* 640a.

[163] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid.

While the imposed aristocracy following this battle marked a period of "ascendency" or proper "rulership" for Plato and Aristotle, the event of theatrocracy in the theater, by contrast, forebodes the end of ascendency, hierarchy, and sovereignty altogether.[166] As a result of the event in the theater, the aristocratic government was replaced by an "excessive" or "unfettered" democracy, or a democracy in which there was no longer any authority, sovereignty, or distinction between the proper rulers and the ruled.[167] Plato thus describes the event as a *degeneration* from "aristocracy" to democratic "theatrocracy."[168]

What this means is that the event in the theater was the site of a contestation between the people and an aristocracy that had taken power away from them after the revolution and imposed a form of sovereignty and spectacle at once.[169] The conceit of the spectacle — reiterated by the Athenian — was that leading authors, judges, composers, choral leaders, and actors in the aristocracy always knew what was best for the city.[170] But the revolution in the theater "proved to be the starting point" of the people's resistance to this conceit of the best. Composers broke the aristocracy's rules regarding music; the audience refused to "be disciplined or controlled by a stick." They made loud, collective noises to show approval or disapproval; they filled their plays with what Plato calls democratic "propaganda"; and they enacted democracy by collectively judging their own citizen art.

In their revolt, according to Plato, they used their bare voices over and against the *logos*. They refused to be silent in the theater before the *order* and *logos* that defined the best and began to participate with the kind of voices that had no reason to

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[166] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23, 25. Both Plato's late political writings in the *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics* critiqued participatory democracy in an attempt to found "mixed" governments or aristocratic democracies. It is not surprising, then, that the period that the late Plato and Aristotle praise is also the birth of mixed government in Athens' democracy — a moment when proper "representation" or "leadership" of those fit for rule was given to the democracy. This change would have made Athens' participatory "democracy," in actuality, a rule of elites.

[167] Pl. *Leg*. 699e; 701a.

[168] Pl. *Leg*. 701a.

[169] Pl. *Leg*. 698b-699c.

[170] See Pl. *Leg*. 2.

be heard. To be sure, the revolution meant that Athens would no longer be guided by the true authorities who had the *logos*.[171] For, as the Athenian makes clear, the criteria for the fine aristocracy was always the *logos* in their soul.[172] But as the people revolted against the *logos*, they began to perform something else entirely with their bare voices. Silent, they became vocal.[173] This amounted to the rebirth of political participation from all of those without the *logos*.

IV. The Birth of Theatrocracy

But what was the actual, historical, revolutionary event in the theater that gave birth to democracy through music? What is the revolution in music to which Plato is referring? In other words, if Athens' democracy was born out of this kind of music and theater, as Plato says it was, when did this kind of theater itself begin? How then did the Greeks first *perform* a democracy?

While Plato offers us a genealogy of Athens' democracy, he does not offer us a genealogy of the *theatrocracy* that gave birth to Athens' democracy. The problem with locating this "theatrocracy" in the late 460s BCE is that the Athenian dates the invention of this kind of music to a time "when the old laws applied,"[174] and then tells us that it continues to be practiced "nowadays."[175] In other words, these comments

[171] Pl. *Leg*. 698b-e.
[172] Pl. *Leg*. 689b-e.
[173] Pl. *Leg*. 701a.
[174] Pl. *Leg*. 700a.
[175] Pl. *Leg*. 700c. Plato praises the Athenian Constitution of c. 490 BCE in particular as a time when "we Athenians had a constitution, inherited from the distant past, in which a number of public offices were held on the basis of four property-classes. Lady Modesty was the mistress of our hearts, a despot who made us live in willing subjection to the laws then in force. Moreover, the enormous size of the army that was coming at us…served to increase our obedience to the authorities and the law" (Pl. *Leg*. 698c). He says elements of this constitution returns ten years later around 480 BCE due to the fear caused by another battle (Pl. *Leg*. 699a).

date the actual, historical development of this music anywhere from the constitution of Solon in the 6th Century all the way up until the time in which Plato is writing.[176]

Plato also tells us that these aristocratic or "traditional laws of the state" or the "ancient code of laws" applied in Athens around 490 BCE, but also during the threats of attack about ten years later.[177] It is even possible that the Athenian's lament of theater "nowadays" indicates that Plato, like many ancient writers, is only telling the history of this "event" in order to intervene in a debate on theater in his own time.[178]

We know that ancient Greek theater was initially made up of citizens of the community who sang and danced in a remarkably public art form. But the genre that gave birth to the theater was not synchronic, but diachronic, not simply one genre, but many, not just one poetic configuration, but passing vocal constitutions. Poetry was wholly reconfigured in relation to performative events even as their institutional names, i.e. "theater" or "chorus," remained the same. Just like the name "democracy."

What began as an improvised chorus undergoes several significant transformations from the time it is created in the late 7th Century to the early 4th Century.[179] Early tragedy is performed in the service of a tyrant in the late 7th and early 6th centuries, for instance. It is significantly transformed in the mid-6th Century in the years leading up to the Athenian revolution, and transformed significantly once

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[176] At times Plato casts a wide historical net in the *Laws*. For instance, see his discussion on art and music at Pl. *Leg*. 656d-e: "Long ago, apparently, they realized the truth of this principle we are putting forward only now…. If you examine their art on the spot, you will find that ten thousand years ago (and I'm not speaking loosely: I mean literally ten thousand)…the same artistic rules were applied in making them."

[177] Pl. *Leg*. 699c.

[178] Pl. *Leg*. 700c.

[179] The Greeks "brought the poetic art into being out of their improvised performances," Arist. *Poet.* 1448b24-25. Sachs translation. On the improvisational origin of tragedy, see Bruno Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century*, trans. A. Thomas Cole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 15; Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, Second Edition, Revised by T. B. L. Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 96-98; Bernhard Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos: Geschichte einer Gattung* (Berlin: Verlag Antike, 2008), 22, 133, 139.

again in the 5th Century. By the middle of the 5th Century, professional actors and musicians and private financiers lead and fund tragedy, just as professional politicians and rhetoricians battle for ascension in the Athenian Assembly.[180]

How, then, was democracy initially *performed*? How was it choreographed as if it were a dramatic action on the stage in the theater? Our hope in the rest of this chapter is to discover more about how democracy might have been invented in the theater. But in order to follow the background of Plato's genealogy into theatrocracy, we must depart somewhat from Plato's text in order to consider a historical genealogy of this kind of theater itself. In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss some of the historical transformations in the theater in Athens around the periods in question in Plato's *Laws*. We show that rather than remaining synchronic or the same, the theater was re-configured by various groups of citizens throughout the history of Athens' theater as a way of being political.

[180] Aristotle's *Poetics* and Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* are two philosophical attempts to offer a genealogy of several of these changes in Greek tragedy.

Part II. The Chorus of Democracy

We find at least three historic transformations in the tragic genre of the chorus in Athens within the dates in question in Plato's *Laws*. These three, distinct poetics will be called *The Voice of the Tyrant* (late 7th to mid-6th Century); *The Polyphony of Voice* (mid to late-6th Century); and the *Voice of the People* (5th and early 4th Century). Each of these three poetics of the chorus are analyzed below in terms of their *politics*, their *authorship*, and their *poetics*, beginning with *The Voice of the Tyrant* in the late 7th and early 6th Century and working up through the early 4th Century. We hope to show the ways in which the poetics of the theater is reconfigured by different groups of citizens in the performance culture of Athens, and, ultimately, to show how Athenian democracy can be anticipated or registered through these performances in its theater.

I. The Voice of the Tyrant

We saw in the *Preface* that the theater that Plato is describing is a kind of dithyrambic performance. Yet the first dithyrambic choruses to appear in Greece were far from democratic. As the scholar of Greek tragedy Pickard-Cambridge writes, "the

cyclic dithyramb was, until a comparatively late period, an entirely undemocratic song…."[181]

According to Herodotus and others, the technology of the dithyrambic, citizen chorus first emerged not in a time of democracy, but rather under the direct support of tyrants from around the end of the 7th century to the mid-6th century in at least the locations of Korinth, Sikyon, and Athens.[182] In an effort to unify the people behind their rule, the tyrants Periander of Korinth, Kleisthenes of Sikyon, and Peisistratos of Athens all supported the first-known public performances of choruses made up of members of the *dēmos*.[183]

The choruses were part of a festival or a media program in which each of these tyrants instituted a religious politic through the political use of the god Dionysus.[184] Directly through the chorus of the *dēmos*,[185] the tyrants set up cults to Dionysus in the center of the city, and, at least in the case of Kleithenes of Sikyon, vehemently forbid the worship of other popular gods and considered other gods a threat to their regime.[186] The choice of Dionysus as a god encouraged an affect of unity and

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[181] Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 94.

[182] Hdt. 1, 23; Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 9-20, 97-8; Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia: The Chorus, the City and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18. See especially "Tyrannis und Dithyrambos im 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.," in Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 26-35; T. B. L. Webster, *The Greek Chorus* (London: Methuen, 1970), 67-80.

[183] On the notion of *choreia* as the singing and dancing of citizens in a chorus, see William Mullen, *Choreia: Pindar and Dance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3; on the role of the *dēmos* in the chorus, see Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos,* ch. 3 and 8; on the chorus as a pact between the tyrant and the people against the aristocracy, see Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos,* 32. On the notion of the *komoi* or *komos* in connection and relation to the rural people and not the aristocrats, and Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 156, and Arist. *Poet.* 1448a30-38.

[184] Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 101, 129. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 29, 33, 36. Kleisthenes, the tyrant of Sikyon, expelled the worship of the Argive hero Adratus and encouraged the worship of Dionysus. Kleisthenes's policies were similar to those of Peisistratus, who afterwards did this in Athens.

[185] Hdt. 1, 23; 5, 67.

[186] Hdt. 5, 67; Arist. *Poet.* 1448a30-38; Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 31. According to Pickard-Cambridge, it seems to have been cultivated in Dorian

togetherness, if not an absolute absorption into a community headed by the tyrant.[187] Each of the three tyrants used the same technology, the chorus, and each the same god, Dionysus.[188] In sum, what was sung by the chorus was not exactly a common hymn, but more like an *anthem*: the chorus was the voice of the tyrant, amplified by the spectacle and voices of the *dēmos*, and made sovereign under the aura of the god of unity and self-effacement.

In the earliest, most reliable note we have, the author associated with these performances appears to be of relatively little importance.[189] Unlike the famous, prize-winning playwrights of the 5th century who were paraded through Athens like heroes returning home from war,[190] the late 6th century author takes on the character of an impersonal, *symbolic figure* in the service of the tyrant and his festival.[191]

For instance, in what is often considered to be the most significant citation on the chorus during this period, Herodotus suggests that Arion was seen as a gift of the god Dionysus to the sovereign tyrant of Korinth, Periander.[192] Herodotus writes: "Periander…was the son of Kypselus, and sovereign (*etyrranneue*) of Korinth. The Korinthians say (and the Lesbians agree) that the most marvellous thing that happened to him in his life was the landing on Taenarus of Arion of Methymna, brought there by a dolphin."[193] The poet Arion's journey on the back of dolphin — the journey that brought him to the tyrant[194] — is closely connected with stories belonging

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lands, but to have attained its full literary development in connection with the Dionysian festival at Athens — first under the tyrants, then under the democracy.

[187] See especially descriptions of Peisistratus in Athens in Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 32-33. See also Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 138.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Hdt. 1, 23.

[190] Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia,* 122; on the introduction of prizes, see Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 44; on the absence of the first person singular voice or the role of heroes, see Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 5.1, 5.2.

[191] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 24-5.

[192] Herodotus 1, 23; *Suda*; Proclus, *Chrest.* xii; Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, cf. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 10, 77; Webster, *The Greek Chorus*, 67.

[193] Hdt. 1, 24.

[194] Ibid.

to the cults of Dionysus, a god to whom worship was mandated by the tyrants.[195] It is likely being suggested, therefore, that the poet Arion is considered by the Korinthians to be a gift of the god Dionysus to the tyrant; he is the physical, observable symbol of a divine pact between the god Dionysus and his chosen one, the tyrant — a pact to which the living, dithyrambic chorus of citizens bears testimony.

Arion is credited by Herodotus as creating (*poiēsanta*) a new poetic form — the dithyrambic chorus.[196] Still, the lack of poetic contests, competitive prizes, choral leaders, judges and sponsors, first person singular voice, or the poet's self-praise, all of which appear much later in the tragic genre[197] — all makes the personal authorship of the poet less important than the totalizing and dominant political and religious narrative that he served and symbolized.[198] (As we will see, the personal qualities of the composer-author become extremely important in Plato's *Laws* and, more generally, for the aristocracy in 5th and 4th century Athens).

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[195] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 27 fn. 24; Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 10.

[196] Hdt. 1, 23. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 24-25; Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 77.

[197] See Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 24-5, on the following: the noted absence of a khoregos, or a sponsor; the prejudice against nobility, aristocrats, and oligarchs; the absence of nobility, archons, and khoregoi structure; and that Arion collaborates with the chorus in order to practice this and improvise.

[198] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 42, 44. Instead of financial sponsors or tribal archons who evaluated and selected poets democratically and on their ability to win poetic contests against other poets, the poet is a centralizing figure of the discourse, one who stands in the place of the tyrant and ventriloquizes the tyrant's discourse. The poet is almost a kind of puppet controlled by strings from above. Whether the poet-author "Arion" actually existed is an unresolved question, not just because the lack of sources and his mysterious name, but also because of the anonymity and the pseudonymity of poets during this time. For instance, poets could write under the name of one poet, often one who had a mythical or godlike aura around it, or texts could be anthologized under the name of one poet, such as in the case with "Homer." In other cases, the author's name was simply seen as unimportant or not recorded. Whatever the reasons for these omissions or pseudonymns, the evidence suggests that there is perhaps during this time a certain anonymity of the author.

It is also significant that the technology of the rhapsode is replaced by the tyrants during this period.[199] As Bernhard Zimmermann writes, Arion's work for the tyranny is not just to implement a poetics of the chorus; it is an obvious shift away from the poetics of the rhapsode. Rhapsodes performed a retelling of epic poetry in which familiar stories were chosen by *chance* or *request* or by some selection, freely *improvised* upon, and performed by individual and potentially critical poets in the context of public contests or festivals.[200] In these public contests we find some early elements of democracy emerging in poetic practice: individuals speaking freely about something common in the context of a public festival or *agōn*. But here we must remember that an *agōn* is first and foremost a collaborative public festival or gathering of the people or tribe; it is *not* a mode of unfriendly competition, heroism, gladiator violence, or exploitation, and as a festival defined by community and shared participation, it is distinct from modern notions of libertarianism or capitalism.[201]

These poetic festivals take place widely in Greece before the theories of democracy are written or the major reforms of democracy are instituted. It is significant, then, that the rhapsode is replaced by the tyrants with choruses that sing and dance together in a closed, circular movement.[202] The choruses are completely choral without any actors or protagonists, and their musical accompaniment was forbidden to be too ornate so as to give the musician unequal importance over the chorus.[203] Just like a prized poet in the city's public space, chosen as the winner of

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[199] On the rhapsodic contest in general, see Plato's *Ion*; Bruno Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century*, trans. A. Thomas Cole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 52, 55; Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 79-91; and Jean-Luc Nancy's essay on Plato's *Ion*, "Sharing Voices," in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990): 211-259.

[200] Hdt. 5, 67. Cf. Pl. *Hipparch*. 228b-c, where the son of Peisistratos reintroduces the rhapsode contest.

[201] LSJ 18-19.

[202] Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 94, 98.

[203] T. B. L. Webster, *The Greek Chorus* (London: Methuen, 1970), 67.

rhapsodic contests, any beloved musician or actor more powerful than the citizen chorus might have been interpreted as an aggression against the tyrant.

In the case of Kleisthenes of Sikyon, the tyrant banned rhapsodic contests and instituted the chorus because the rhapsodists performed poems that alluded to the greatness of his political rival, Adrastus — the very person who, Herodotus tells us, is said to have been called the rightful "king of Sikyon."[204] It is suggested by Herodotus that the rhapsodes offered the people of Sikyon a chance to voice or hear alternatives to the tyrant's politics in the public space, and that the new poetics of the chorus was an effort to saturate the public space with a kind of discourse.[205]

In sum, the *voice of the tyrant* could best be described as a poetics of absolute *harmony* or *unison*. The Dionysian chorus of 7th century Korinth, Sikyon, and Athens was used to harmonize the people into a religious-political narrative. The chorus assimilated the people's support for the tyrant, and it did so by projecting a spectacle of common people praising him.[206] Along with binding the people to their rule and promoting a religion-politic of Dionysus, the tyrants' media campaigns had a further, very interesting political effect: it limited the influence and power of a competing class of nobles, aristocrats, and oligarchs, all of whom threatened the tyrants' hold on power.[207] It absorbed any aristocratic factions that threatened the tyrant's hold on power, in part by invoking a god whom the aristocrats also worshiped alongside the people. Finally, the *poetics* of the chorus expressed the period's tyrannic politics in a most originary way. The poetics of the chorus did not merely symbolize the political situation; it *performed* it.

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[204] Hdt. 5, 67. Cf. Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 101.

[205] Likewise, in tyrannic Korinth, Bernard Zimmermann notes that Arion's chorus was a shift away from the poetics of the rhapsode.

[206] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 25.

[207] Hdt. 5, 67, 5; Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 32, 33, 35, 138. The aristocratic class was not only made less significant by the tyrant's dithyrambic chorus of citizens, but even they too were persuaded to withhold their political ambitions and join in with others in the Dionysian spirit of unity and togetherness.

II. The Coming *Polyphōnia*

Before Athens was formally called a democracy — before Athens was a democracy in "name" — the author of the *Athenian Constitution* says that what was called a "tyranny" was looked on as a democracy.[208] This claim, of course, is untrue. The tyrant Peisistratos, for example, was driven out of Athens by the people once, and the Aristotelian says that he only returned to power by tricking the people through the use of his voice.[209] Nevertheless, the politics of Athens in the mid- to late-sixth century Athens could generally be described as a tyranny, but one with anti-oligarchical and populist, if not more egalitarian, economic policies.[210]

Peisistratos, the mid-6th century tyrant of Athens, was looked on by Aristotle as "an extreme democrat."[211] We are told that the tyrant's tax policies redistribute wealth to working people.[212] This not only limits the power of the oligarchy; it also builds a strong agricultural economy by directly supporting the labor of the poorer class — the class which Aristotle calls the "people."[213] Secondly, in contrast to the "civic purity" of later, democratic Athens in which only some had the rights of full citizenship,

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[208] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 13, 14. Unless otherwise noted, the translation used is that of F. G. Kenyon in "Constitution of Athens," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). Aristotle says in Book 13 of the Athenian Constitution that Peisistratos was looked upon as an "extreme democrat" and, in Book 14, that Peisistratos had the reputation of being an extreme democrat: "His administration was more like a constitutional government than the rule of a tyrant."

[209] Cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15. As the Aristotelian writes, Peisistratos "made his reign stable by disarming the people through the use of his voice." That Athens continued to be ruled by a tyrant — however democratic or anti-aristocratic his policies were — meant that Athens was far from a democracy. The claim also informs us about the fluidity of the name "democracy" among aristocrats such as Aristotle.

[210] The extent to which these practices were democratic is a major point of contention among scholars.

[211] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 13.

[212] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16: "…he advanced money to the poorer people to help them in their labours, so that they might make their living by agriculture. In this he had two objects, first that they might not spend their time in the city but might be scattered over all the face of the country, and secondly that, being moderately well off and occupied with their own business, they might have neither the wish nor the time to attend to public affairs."

[213] Ibid.

Peisistratos adds the names of both the poor and those without "pure descent" onto the citizen-roll.[214] Interestingly, these added names are removed only after the city formally becomes a democracy because the people were said to have been added "without having a right to it."[215] Peisistratos institutes local justices and attempts to ensure equal justice for all so that no one has special privileges in the court. This practice is supported by Peisistratos' own equal participation in the court system that is, when he is accused of a crime, he appears personally before the court.[216]

According to the Aristotelian, Peisistratos' reforms had the full support of the people of Athens: he describes rumors in which the people called Peisistratos the chosen favorite of Solon Solon was by that time considered by some to be "the father of democracy"[217] and referred to Peisistratos' era as "the age of gold."[218] Ultimately, as the Aristotelian writes, "His administration was more like a constitutional government than the rule of a tyrant."[219]

But if the economic policies of the tyrant Peisistratos were somewhat more egalitarian, the Aristotelian also suggests why this was the case: the tyrant wanted to busy the people with their own agricultural businesses in the countryside so that the people would "not spend their time in the city" and "have neither the wish nor the time to attend to public affairs."[220] But whatever the aristocratic Aristotle might say, the exact opposite of these stated goals takes place: poetry contests re-appear at the public festival during this time.[221] The new economic policies are accompanied by a

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[214] Cf. Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia,* 80.

[215] On slaves, peasant-citizens, women, foreigners, and immigrants in Athenian democracy, see E.M. Wood, *Peasant-Citizen and Slave: The Foundations of Athenian Democracy* (New York: Verso, 1988).

[216] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.

[217] On Solon, see Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 12, 14.

[218] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.

[219] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 14

[220] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.

[221] On the institution of poetry contests under Peisistratos, see Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 31, 76, and Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 32; on objections to this, arising from the dating of the first dithyrambic contest in 508 on the Marmor Parium, see

revolution in the theater: the return of independent, citizen choral performances in the public space. The festival of Panathenaea, founded under Peisistratos, is reformed to add music and poetry competitions, and the great theater festival of Dionysia is founded.[222] The city is opened up to a polyphony of gods and, along with them, competing political ideas.[223]

Because rhapsodic contests had been banned under the former tyrants, it was nothing short of a revolution to hear multiple, citizen voices performing for and about the city in the bright open. And yet although some democratic practices emerge, Athens is not yet fully a democracy. What is lacking is the performative participation of the people in their democracy. Although Athens may be increasingly a government *to* the people, it is not yet a government *of* the people.[224] That is to say, it is not yet a *theatrocracy*.

III. The Polyphony of Voice

At some point during the last quarter of the 6th century BCE in Athens, the poet Lasos of Hermione is said to be responsible for re-introducing choral contests in which he himself was an equal participant, or one poet among many diverse and competing poets.[225] This friendly *agōn* of diverse choruses of citizens at the early,

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Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, footnote 2 on p. 32; Josiah Ober considers the earlier date valid, saying, "The Tyrants had encouraged political self-consciousness on the part of the masses of ordinary citizens by the sponsorship of festivals and building programs. The upshot was that by 510-508 BC the ordinary Athenian male had come a long way from the status of a politically passive client of a great house," in Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/507 BCE: Violence, Authority, and the Origins of Democracy," in *Ancient Greek Democracy: Readings and Sources*, ed. Eric Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 98; on the possible re-appearance of the rhapsodic contest in particular under Peisistratos son, see Pl. *Hipparch*. 228b-c.

[222] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 32.

[223] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 138.

[224] On this distinction, see Eric W. Robinson, *The First Democracies: Early Popular Government Outside Athens* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 57.

[225] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c. *Suda*, pp. 506-7, lambda 139. *Das Marmor Parium*, ed. Felix Jacoby (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904), 14-15 (See also Jacoby's commentary on

public festival – at which no prizes or monuments were awarded, but all participated equally – has been described by many as directly influencing the democratic reforms of Kleisthenes.[226] As Josiah Ober puts it, "The Tyrants had encouraged political self-consciousness on the part of the masses of ordinary citizens by the sponsorship of festivals and building programs. The upshot was that by 510-508 BC the ordinary Athenian male had come a long way from the status of a politically passive client of a great house."[227]

Along with introducing these choral contests at the festival in Athens, Lasos is said to have altered the poetic genre of the dithyrambic chorus itself in such a way that he reconfigured it, the process of which the Plutarch calls a "revolution" or complete transformation.[228] But we should always keep this in mind: although Lasos is singled out by the later Greek commentator on music, we discover in the text that he was not alone, but rather a part of a network of poets who each enact similar changes during this time.[229] Indeed, a sea change in poetic practice occurs in the days or months or years before the actual democratic revolution.[230]

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pp. 110-12); Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia: The Chorus, the City and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16; Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 14, 91; Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 36. Unless otherwise noted, the translation of the Plutarch's commentary *On Music* that is used is that of J.H. Bromby in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ of Plutarch* (College House: The Press of C. Whittingham, 1822).

[226] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 32, 36; (Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/7 BC" in Robinson, *Ancient Greek Democracy: Readings and Sources*, 98.

[227] Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/7 BC" in Robinson, *Ancient Greek Democracy: Readings and Sources*, 98.

[228] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c; Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ of Plutarch*, trans. J.H. Bromby (College House: The Press of C. Whittingham, 1822), 73; on the democratic revolution in music, see Pl. *Leg.* 700e-701a.

[229] [Plut.] *De mus.* 15, 27, 29, 30; [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142b-e; Pl. *Resp*. 399c-d; Pl. *Leg*. 700a-c, 812d-e; Arist. *Pol*. 1341a37-1341b19; Arist. *Poet.* 1448a10-18; 1461b31-35; Pind. *Pyth*. 12; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7, ed., trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England, 1998), 329-30.

[230] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 4.1; Pl. *Leg.* 700e-701a.

The poet Lasos, among others, then, is said to have reconfigured the poetic form of the chorus specifically through *phōnē*, namely through the notes or "voices" of the flute.[231] Even more specifically, he is said to have done this through a poetics of *phōnē*, which the Greek text calls "*polyphōnia*" meaning many voices or multivoiced.[232] But what is it about Lasos' poetry that signals a revolutionary change in both the poetics and politics of his time? What would the poetics of polyphony or "many-voiced" perform if, as Plato and Aristotle suggest, poetry for the Greeks is a political practice or even a "pre-political practice"?[233]

We are told by the Ps. Plutarch that the poetics themselves of the dithyrambic chorus are altered as if a revolution or transformation had taken place.[234] The specific word choices of the Ps.-Plutarch's are worth noting. Although the word polyphony refers initially to the flute (*tōn aulōn polyphōnia*), as in an increase in the number of notes played on the flute, the description of *polyphōnia* also comes to take on broader, political implications.

The phrase used by the Ps. Plutarch to describe *polyphōnia* directly is *pleiosi te phthoggois kai dierrimmenois*.[235] The first word *pleiosi*, from *pleiōn*, can simply mean more in number, size, or extent, but is a word that is often used to describe the mass or crowd, as in *hoi pleunes*,[236] or the people in opposition to the chief men.[237] The noun it describes, *phthoggois*, may mean the notes on a musical instrument, but, as Liddell and Scott note, it is also used in the Greek language to describe the voices of people. Finally, the word *dierrimmenois*, from *diarriptō*, means a kind of scattering or dispersal and is used by Plutarch[238] to describe cities without a strong, consolidated state (cities consolidated into a republic) and/or the absence of political leadership or

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[231] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c; Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ,* 73.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia*, 76.
[234] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c; Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ,* 73.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Hdt. 1.106.
[237] Thuc. 8.73, 89.
[238] See Plut. *Phil.* 8.

representation. The direct description of polyphony we find, then, is far more complicated than what first appears to be a simple increase in the number of notes played on the flute. It also implies a political phenomenon in which a multitude of voices are "scattered," that is, without representation, leaders, or state.

The democratic and anarchic connotations of Ps.-Plutarch's description of polyphony could be overlooked if we did not find them reinforced elsewhere. The Plutarch, an aristocratic thinker who is trained in Plato's thought, describes polyphony as a corruption,[239] a subordination or a transgression against leaders,[240] a rejection of traditional education and the proper guides for music and philosophy,[241] as lacking any account or explanation,[242] as unsystematic and irrational,[243] as compositions exhibiting wildness and novelty,[244] and as art that goes against good public morals.[245]

In fact, if we read the Plutarch's description of polyphony alongside the text of the so-called "Old Oligarch," other conservative poets like Pratinas, or Plato in the *Republic* and the *Laws* and Aristotle in Book 8 of the *Politics*, we arrive at a peculiar consensus among the Athenian aristocracy about a kind of poetry that inspires anarchy.[246] The polyphony that the Plutarch, a Platonist, describes, is the musical phenomenon that Plato bans from the city at the moment in the *Republic* when he distinguishes between the voices of the people and the *logos* of the guardians.[247]

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[239] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c; Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 73.

[240] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c-d.

[241] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142b-d.

[242] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142e.

[243] Ibid.

[244] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142c. See translation of J.H Bromby in Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 81. Bromby is attentive not only to a translation of the words of the Plutarch, but also to the tone or voice of the author, which is often marked by the consternation of a traditionalist or social conservative.

[245] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1142e-f.

[246] For the aristocratic perspective, see also the "Old Oligarch's" *Constitution of Athens*.

[247] Pl. *Resp*. 399c-d. Cf. Arist. *Pol*. 1341b. See [Plut.] *De mus.* 30, where he likens the *polyphōnia* or many voices of the flute to the increase of the number of strings on the lyre, or

Likewise, while Aristotle's *Politics* begins by distinguishing between the word *phōnē*, or the bare voice, and proper political speech, or *logos*, it concludes with a warning against *polyphōnia* in music, saying that it amounts to the end of proper spectatorship[248] and prevents "the use of the logos."[249] If the city is to be built according to a poetics of *logos* in which a separate political class is trained, writes Plato, "there will be no need of many-toned or panharmonic instruments" or "craftsman who make…the instruments that are many-stringed and play many modes."[250] Only democratic or anarchic people, Plato says in the section on democracy in Book VIII of the *Republic*, prefer the voices of "a numerous chorus," "all-varied" and "many-colored," to the *logos*.[251]

VII. *Polyphōnia*: The Death of the Author

With this aristocratic resistance to "anarchic" or "democratic" polyphonic poetry in mind, perhaps we can better begin to imagine the importance of a chorus dancing and improvising around a polyphonic flute player without any principle author, professional actors, or leader of any kind with the *logos*.

Consider the change in the role of the author-composer during this time. As the Plutarch tells us, in former times the poet was the author and the musician was in the service of the poet. The Plutarch writes, "…the flute-players, who were considered in the light of servants to the composers, [were] bound to conform scrupulously to

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what was called "polychordia." Cf. Martha Maas, "Polychordia and the Fourth-Century Greek Lyre," *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter, 1992): 74-88.

[248] Arist. *Pol.* 1253a10-18. Cf. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 34.

[249] Arist. *Pol.* 1341a25.

[250] Pl. *Resp*. 399c-d. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1341b.

[251] Pl. *Resp.* 560e, 561e. The polyphony of voice that the Plutarch, a Platonist, describes, is a nearly word-for-word description of the musical phenomenon that Plato bans from the city at the very moment in the *Republic* when he distinguishes between the voices of the people and the *logos* of the guardians.

their instructions[...]but…[after Lasos and others]…this subordination ceased."[252] Or, as the conservative poet Pratinas puts it obstinately, "It is for me to make the noise, like a swan leading the many-feathered song. The song is the queen appointed by the Muse, let the flute dance afterwards. For it is the servant."[253]

The aristocracy's initial problem with the theater of *polyphōnia* is that the authorial voice of an aristocratic poet no longer precedes and instructs the chorus as if the chorus were the "servant" of the author-poet. With the turn enacted by Lasos, the author's narrative is interrupted. The *phōnē* or sound of the flute-player becomes more important than the words or meaning of the author; it is what encourages the people to sing and dance together improvisationally.[254] The flute-player, as pure *phōnē* or voice, is by itself impotent; it does not dictate a narrative or even speech, nor do records suggest that the flute-player is held to be of any special prestige or importance, as his name does not appear in the official records of the dithyrambic victories until the 4th century.[255] The members of the chorus are radically equal, fully participatory, aleatory, improvisional, and profoundly without leaders.

Second, not only has the importance of the author been displaced, but there are not yet any principle actors or speakers as in the later plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Euripides, for example.[256] Without an author, or even lead actors who come to lead the drama in the 5th century, the chorus of the citizens is

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[252] Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ of Plutarch*, trans. J.H. Bromby (College House: The Press of C. Whittingham, 1822), 74-5; Aristotle likewise complains that such "low-grade flute players… drag the choral leader around when they perform…" (Arist. *Poet.* 1461b31-35). For the flute-player as someone who is not of greater importance than others, or not mentioned in the official records, see Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 36.

[253] Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 17; Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia*, 19-20, 130.

[254] Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 17.

[255] See Pierre Lévêque and Pierre Vidal-Naquet on their thesis of the creation of an "egalitarian civic space and time," in *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato*, trans. David Ames Curtis (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1996), xxiv.

[256] On the increase of lyric dialogues with the actors, see Helene Foley, "Choral Identity in Greek Tragedy," Classical Philology 98 no. 1 (January 2003), 8.

always improvising and creating, always at the risk of saying something unintended, of a further revolution, of a collective enunciation of what Lacan calls an unconscious *phōnēme* that appears in a *polyphony* of language.[257]

It is a moment in which comedy and tragedy are, as Nietzsche said, "only the chorus and nothing but the chorus."[258] It is *not* a poetics when, as A.W. Schlegel would later write, the chorus was the "ideal spectator" of a play.[259] Rather, the citizen *chorus* of bare and equal voices *is* the play itself. There is not yet any first-person voice of the actor, nor is there any first-person voice of the poet, the evidence of which comes only later with Pindar and other lyric poets.[260] Without actors who later will come and, as Aristotle says, lead the chorus[261], the chorus of citizens improvise their own tragedies and perform a democracy of poetry in the public space of the festival. The chorus is, as Aristotle writes in the *Poetics*, fully "participatory" and political. They are a *polyphony of voices*.

V. The Problem of the Aristocracy

Philologists of this period describe an incredible democratic and egalitarian character to Lasos' and others' poetry and to the festival during this time.[262] Perhaps even more incredible to modern democrats is the profound affect of what

[257] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, Trans. Bruce Fink, in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 146.

[258] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 42.

[259] See Nietzsche's discussion of Schlegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43.

[260] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 42, 44; cf. 24-5.

[261] See Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 90, 133, on the notion of the first actor as the exarchon of the dithyramb, now made independent of the chorus; see Sir Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 79, on notion of entry of speech in tragedy.

[262] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 36.

Zimmermann calls a *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* or a feeling of being together in a city.[263]

"The rule of the people" or *dēmokratia* can only be said to emerge when this poetics is not only a matter of aesthetics but also of shared political power. Before this, however, the choral poetry contests which are reintroduced at Athenian festivals in the mid-6th century establish a unique and influential poetics of performance that amounts to shared rule or theatrocracy: no longer is there one poet or one chorus which serves as the voice of the tyrant; the city now enjoys poets of all different persuasions and multiple, competing choruses before a participatory, critical public.[264] This and other factors have the effect of involving the audience, of making them less spectators of a show and now active and important participants in a singular, communal event.[265]

We know that a sea change in poetics occurred with the introduction of *polyphōnia* at the festival. Later commentaries by Plato, Aristotle, the Plutarch and others give us strong indication that this music was associated with radical democracy. It would be difficult to say that the new assembly that emerged with its diversity of voices and yet sense of common project was not directly influenced by what the people had witnessed and enacted at the festival in the years leading up to the revolution: the performances of multiple, agonistic citizen choruses which they would now perform in their politics. How is it, then, that the citizens of Athens spontaneously acted in concert and performed a democratic revolution? They had been performing it in their poetry for years.[266]

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[263] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 138.

[264] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 36.

[265] Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 139. On the audiences involvement, see Arist. *Pol.* 1341a37-1341b19.

[266] On the democratic nature of poetry festivals after Lasos, see Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 32; for more general and philosophical views, see Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy," in Reginald Lilly, ed., *The Ancients and the Moderns* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 52; see also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 187-8; Nietzsche, however,

What occurred shortly after with the Athenian democratic revolution was not, as Aristotle and others have suggested, simply the institution of ideas and norms by a democratic "leader" named Kleisthenes.[267] Unlike the heroic narrative that was later given to the revolution, at the time of the Athenian revolution there was no "great man" of history who was seen as the "Father of Democracy," no democratic "leader" such as Thucydides' "Pericles," and certainly no modern "leader" formally instituted as the "representative" or *voice of the people*.[268] If we simply follow the thread of *how* and *why* the events of 508/7 BCE occurred, we find that the actual Athenian

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contests this claim: see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 42: when thinking of the chorus in Aeschylus and Sophocles it is blasphemous to speak of a "constitutional representation of the people."

[267] Among those heroizing Kleisthenes, see, for instance, Pierre Lévêque and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato*, trans. David Ames Curtis (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1996), xxv. Kleisthenes, the leading member of a prominent family, whom Aristotle calls the people's "leader" and "guide," was not even in Athens during the revolution (Hdt. 5.72.1), and, although he was brought back afterwards along with the others from exile (Hdt. 5.73), he re-emerges in Book 6 only after the Herodotus' discussion of *isēgoria* (5.78) (the equal prerogative of everyone to address the assembly) and *isokratia* (5.92a.1) (the equal rule of/by all). He is, nevertheless, someone who was able to listen to the constitutive voices of the revolution and attempt to institute policies that would appeal to them. Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* devotes very little time to the Athenian Revolution (about the size of a paragraph) and describes the people as a mob (on this point, see Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/507 BCE," in *Ancient Greek Democracy,* ed. Robinson, 103). In Aristotle's criticism of "mob" democracy in the *Politics*, he may have thought the democratic revolution was of less importance and of little "good" for the city, being what he considers a fourth type of democracy controlled by the uneducated, uncontrolled mob which makes bad decisions or acts with wickedness. Cf. Eric W. Robinson, *The First Democracies: Early Popular Government Outside Athens* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 49.

[268] Although this aristocratic, heroizing narrative technique would seem to bely the very origins of the revolution itself, it is important to question why a *poetics* of the hero might be so pervasive in later retellings of the revolution. After the anti-aristocratic attempts by tyrants to squelch heroes and heroes' gods, we find the gradual increase of Homeric-like heroes in the poetics of 5th and 4th century Greek literature and history. By the 4th century, for instance, Solon was considered the "Father of Democracy." On this point, see Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 106-7. If instead we follow the thread of *how* the Athenians carried out *their* revolution in 508/7 BCE, and if we attribute these events to the *polyphony of voices* that it is suggested by Herodotus to be rather than to one voice, we find that the Athenian revolution carried out by a multitude that is increasingly ignored for the sake of aristocratic leaders and an emerging culture of the self.

revolution was carried out as the *collective enunciation* of a *polyphony of voices* — not *one* voice. We find that these voices demanded and brought about a new politics of *polyphony* — one that uncannily resembles the poetics of the voice that was performed by citizen choruses in the mid- to late-6th century Athens.[269]

What sparked the revolution was the attempt to dissolve the council (*boulē*) and replace it with by a body of 300 supporters of Isagoras and, secondly, to purge the city of 700 families to make it free of a "curse."[270] It was ultimately this attempt to remove *polyphony* from the Council and, interestingly, religious *contamination* from the city, that sparked the masses' insurrection. In 508/7 BCE in the city of Athens, a polyphony of different classes of people found their own, unique voice to be in agreement with others about a situation.[271] As Herodotus writes, although they were of different groups, they "were of one mind."[272] The Athenians responded to the tyrants' attempt to purge the city and dissolve the *boulē* with great *disquiet*. The *boulē* "resisted and refused to obey"[273] and the "multitude" or "people" assembled.[274]

As the scholar Josiah Ober writes, "The Athenian siege of the Acropolis in 508/7 is best understood as a riot — a violent and more or less spontaneous uprising by

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[269] Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia: The Chorus, the City and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-14.

[270] Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/507 BCE," in *Ancient Greek Democracy*, ed. Robinson, 98: "And yet [despite the growing self-counsciousness on the part of the masses or ordinary citizens as a result of the festivals and building programs], the political institutions in which an Athenian man could express his developing sense of citizenship were, in early 508, still quite rudimentary and dominated by the elite. We may suppose that the traditional 'constitution,' as revised by Solon, still pertained. Thus there were occasional meetings of a political Assembly that all citizens had the right to attend. But it is unlikely that those outside the elite had the right or power to speak in that Assembly; nor could they hope to serve on the probouleutic council of 400, as a magistrate, or on the Areopagus council. Cleithenes, as a leading member of a prominent family and as an Areopagite, surely did have both the right and the power to address the Assembly."

[271] Both members of the Boule and the people or the "rest of the Athenians" were in agreement.

[272] Hdt. 5.72.1-2.

[273] Hdt. 5.72.1-2.

[274] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 20.3

a large number of Athenian citizens."[275] In fact, here Ober calls the insurrection a "speech act."[276] The people's spontaneous and collective enunciation demanded a new governing body that was not only a government *for* the people, but a *dēmokratia*, a government *of* and *by* the people.[277] They were not simply petitioning for the return of the *boulē* or the occasional meeting of the assembly, which were still ruled by the elite during this time, but rather a radically different poetics for political performance in which each could *participate* with equal voice in the agora.

What this means more broadly is that democracy is not simply the result of institutions. The institutions of the assembly and the council, for instance, actually preceded the Athenian democratic revolution and were at that time dominated by oligarchs and political elites.[278] Democracy emerged in a poetics that choreographed these institutions differently so as to make them democratic. As Herodotus writes, the post-revolutionary government was not only one of equality (*isonomia*), but also one in which each had equal power or rule (*isokratia*) and equal perogative to address the assembly *(isēgoria)*.[279]

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[275] Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/507 BCE," in *Ancient Greek Democracy,* ed. Robinson, 102.

[276] Ibid., 104. Cf. Pierre Lévêque and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato*, trans. David Ames Curtis (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1996), *xiii-xvii*.

[277] Ibid., 108.

[278] The assembly and the council existed before the democratic revolution and was controlled by political elite; by the late 5th century, may of these institutions were once again controlled by the elite. See Josiah Ober, "The Athenian Revolution of 508/507 BCE," in *Ancient Greek Democracy,* ed. Robinson, 98.

[279] (Hdt. 5.78; 5.92). See Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens,* 222-3; Eric W. Robinson, *The First Democracies*, 47; and Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens,* 85: "The series of democratizing reforms dismantled the magisterial apparatus that had been the institutional basis for collective elite rule in the pre-Cleisthenic period. By mid-century, most offices meant little, provided for no continuity of authority, and were open to all…." See also Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens,* 86, where Ober considers that "the Athenian politician of the earlier fifth century appealed to the demos…through symbols of wealth and birthright that would have been familiar to his sixth-century ancestors."

VIII. A New Birth of Aristocracy, or Oligarchy

It is hard to believe that this incredible poetics of polyphony that first emerged in the poetry festivals was all but shattered by the end of the disastrous Peloponnesian War just 100 years later.[280] The major principles and policies of Athenian democracy and its democratic institutions remained in large part the same, aside from brief *coup d'états* by competing tyrants and oligarchs. But along with stories of Athens' increased hegemony, patriotism, and imperialism during this time, a fundamental change takes place in the *poetics* of Athens' political institutions. Although the name and the institutions of democracy remain the same (*dēmokratia*, the Boulē and the Ekklēssia, etc.), what occurs in Athens in the midst of and as a result of the Peloponnesian War is a loss of an equal sense of belonging to the city and an increase of individualism, justifications for inequality, and a return to heroism.

First, we find in contemporaneous texts like the Old Oligarch's *Constitution of the Athenians* a sense among the oligarchic or aristocratic class that they do not belong equally with others in a common city but are, in fact, far more important than the multitude. Secondly, we find the revolutionary opposition between *isonomia* and *tyrannus* being replaced by a new opposition that appears in literature during the 5th century, namely an opposition between *dēmokratia* and *oligarchia*.[281] This new divide between the *multitude* and the *wealthy* suggests that many people see the new hindrance to equality and democracy to be the inequality of wealth.

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[280] On the break up of democratic consensus after the Peloponnesian War, see Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 53, 134-36.

[281] Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens,* 262. See also, Gustav Adolf Lehmann, "Oligarchia," in Brill's New Pauly.

Thirdly, Athenian democracy is increasingly led by an elite class of professional rhetors and politicians.[282] These experts were, as Ober writes, "relatively few in number, invariably elite in wealth and ability, and usually so in education…."[283] Although this elite still promoted democracy in *name*, the language of heroism, professionalism, leadership, and even political representation in their speech in late 5th and 4th century Athens suggests that Athens becomes more interested in prominent figures and less interested in *how* the people share power equally so as *perform* democracy.[284] As scholars have shown, the historian (Thucydides)[285], the main orators of the Assembly (see especially Demosthenes *Proemia*), and the 4th century memory – if not the actual politics – of Athens' mid-to late-5th century leader Pericles[286] appealed to the *name* "democracy" more than anyone in any preceding time, and yet they appear far less concerned with *how* the demos would equally participate in their rule (*isokratia*) through assembly (*isēgoria*).[287]

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[282] Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens,* 105.

[283] Ibid., 118.

[284] Ibid., 105-107. See Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens,* 219, "…how can a speech that has been seen as a *practice* proper to democracy display, both in its representations and in its language, so many aristocratic characteristics?" See also, for instance, not only Thucydides' famous description of Athens as a democracy in name only, but also Pericles' reported speech at 2.37.1: "By name it is called a democracy because the management of affairs is not given over to the few but to the many. Yet while in the eyes of the law all are equal in private disputes, it is according to reputation for worthiness, however each may distinguish himself, that one receives public honor, not in rotation but from personal excellence...."

[285] Robinson, *The First Democracies*, 55: "[Thucydides] uses this word [*dēmokratia*] and the verbal form *dēmokrateisthai* more often than any other surviving fifth century author. Yet Thucydides does not seem particularly interested in democracy *per se*…. His *opinion* of *dēmokratia* …is inextricably tied up with other issues more urgent to him, especially the decline of Athenian leadership, the morality and consequences of empire, and the reasons for Athens' defeat in the war." Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is, notably, translated by Hobbes.

[286] Cf. Thucydides famous quote that though a democracy in name, Athens was ruled by a first man at Thuc. 2.65; This may, however, represent the views of Thucydides more than the actual policies of Pericles. For this view, see in particular Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens,* 89.

[287] Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 261.

The assembly in which each citizen was expected to voice their concerns was transformed into a *spectacle* in which the people are urged to be *silent* and the principle speakers are a few, professional orators. And while some considered these orators to be democratic heroes – great men inspired with the *logos*[288] and distinct from the ineloquent mob of the people[289] – other texts during this period suggest that they were anti-democratic oligarchs.[290] Whatever the case may be, it was on the basis of advice from heroic men such as Pericles that a spectator democracy agreed to involve itself in the disastrous Peloponnesian War – a war that for many marks the beginning of the decline of Athens.[291] And it was the entrance of this politics of leaders – *dēmagōges* (literally, "those who lead the demos") and *hēgemones* ("they who lead") – that alter the poetics of the Assembly in the late 5th and 4th Centuries, allowing for the disproportionate influence of elite, principal actors.[292]

IX. The Voice of the People: Media, Oligarchy, and Authorial Control

[288] On the aristocratic or elite nature of *logos*, see Gorgias' *Encomium to Helen*; Thuc. 1.139.4; 2.34.6-8; 2.43.2; Pl. *Phaed.* 269e. Mackie, *Oral Performance and Its Context,* 131; or Xen. *Mem.*3.7.6, showing Socrates' views on the ability of the working-class to speak, saying "I will attempt to teach you a lesson. Although you are not shy in the presence of the wisest men…you are ashamed to speak before a gathering of the most stupid and weak people. For how can you be ashamed to speak before fullers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, farmers, merchants, or traders in the market, who think only of buying cheap and selling dear?" See also Ober's "Public Speakers and Mass Audiences," in *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 104-55 ; on "one's civic, rational duty to use the logos," see Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, 223, 249; Lys. 19.

[289] What Pericles calls the occasion of *logos* at 2.43.2, is what Thucydides describes in the *History* at 2.34.6-8 as such: "some man of known ability and high reputation, chosen by the city, delivers a suitable oration over them; after which the people depart. Such is the manner of interment; and the ceremony was repeated from time to time throughout the war. Over those who were the first buried Pericles was chosen to speak. At the fitting moment he advanced from the sepulchre to a lofty stage, which had been erected in order that he might be heard as far as possible by the multitude…."

[290] See, for instance, "Old Oligarch," *The Constitution of the Athenians.*

[291] Thuc. 1.145; cf. Mackie, ed. *Oral Performance and Its Context*, 132.

[292] Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens,* 107.

In contrast to the relative anonymity of poets such as Lasos and Arion, the poets of this period are appointed by "archons" or tribal leaders and are seen as *representatives* of their tribe.[293] They are honored in public with parades through the city, and, for the first time, with public monuments and prizes. Not only do we see the emergence of the first-person voice or "I" pronoun being used by lyric poets such as Pindar during this time, we also find the rise of protagonists who distinguish themselves from the chorus using speech and the first person voice.[294]

As Aristotle writes, although tragedy "came into being from an improvisational origin" and began through "the dithyramb," "Aeschylus first brought the number of actors from one to two, reduced the parts belonging to the chorus, and made speech [*logos*] take the primary place…."[295] Aristotle tells us that these protagonists were *leaders* of the drama because they had speech.[296]

One of the more interesting representations of such a leader, for instance, is the "democratic" hero in Euripides' *Suppliants* when he declares "for *I* made the people sovereign when *I* freed this city a city of equal voting."[297] Euripides' hero sharply contrasts with the earlier, Aeschylean play by the same name in which the king asked the people (the chorus) for a vote of approval.

Still the poets who remarked on their culture could not perform a tragedy or comedy by themselves or even with these new principle actors. They, of course, still required a chorus. And the politics of how the chorus was "granted" by the Archon and financed undemocratically by a member of the wealthy elite gives us one of clearest and most interesting pictures of how aristocrats and oligarchs sought unequal

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[293] Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia: The Chorus, the City and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-14.

[294] Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 90.

[295] Arist. *Poet.* 1449a9-18. Tragedy, as Aristotle writes later in the *Poetics*, ought not to be *alogon* or without logos (Arist. *Poet.* 1454b7).

[296] Arist. *Poet.* 4. Cf. Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 90.

[297] See full statement at Eur. *Supp*. (c. 422 BCE), 349-55, my emphasis. Cf. Robinson, *The First Democracies*, 53.

influence in Athens' post-revolutionary democracy.

There can be no doubt that in financing a chorus – a relatively large sum of money as it required several months of training – the oligarchy saw itself as the true authors and influencers of the most significant form of Athenian culture and media, namely the Greek theater. As the "Old Oligarch" writes, "In the training of dramatic choruses…it is the wealthy who lead the choruses but the people who are led in them."[298] The Oligarch's view was apparently accurate enough that inscriptions for some poetry contests bear the name of the financier of the chorus, not the tribe, as the victor.[299] The financiers of the chorus were not subject to the democratic control that was exercised over those nominated to the year's civic offices.[300] This leaves open the question, as Peter Wilson has argued, as to whether the funding of the chorus – and thus the poetics and politics of later Attic tragedy – opened the door for the oligarchy to take control of Athens through the medium of theater. And, just as interesting, how the *voice of the oligarchy* was packaged by ancient oligarchs as a representation of the *dēmos* or the *voice of the people*.

According to a passage in Aeschines, oligarchic attempts to control the theater were pervasive. Using the public theater as a backdrop, individuals would apparently arrange for a herald to "crown" someone or recognize someone's merit so as to gain political prestige and reputation before the crowd looking on. How they did it shows that the egalitarian poetics of polyphony were breaking down. According to the Aeschines, "…at the performance of the tragedies in the city proclamations were made without authorization of the people."[301] The single voice of a herald would make a proclamation without the consent of the people, as if to "talk over them."

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[298] "Old Oligarch" *Constitution of the Athenians,* 13. We find the curious phrase "to grant [the poets] a chorus" in both Plato's *Republic* and in the *Laws*, while Demosthenes shares a similar sentiment at 21.60.

[299] Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 36-7. The name of the khoregos, not the tribe, is mentioned as victor. By contrast, the name of the flute-player is not recorded until the 4th century.

[300] Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia*, 57.

[301] Aeschin. *Against Ktesiphon*, see esp. sections 41-43.

The institution of the *khoregos* offered aristocrats and oligarchs a leading role as invisible programmers and financiers in Athens. Demosthenes even says that *khoregoi* became more important than the chorus itself.[302] But Plato and Aristotle repeatedly defend their control over the leading or financing of the chorus, often referring even to themselves as those who "grant them a chorus."[303] In fact, the entire Book II of Plato's *Laws* is an attempt to institute a chorus *leader*. As the Athenian writes, "[E]ach and every assembly and gathering for any purpose should invariably have a leader…."[304] In order to make sure our music has "order," the ones with proper order will be installed as chorus-leaders, authors, composers, judges, and educators.[305] By contrast, it is precisely when *polyphōnia* occurs in music, says Aristotle at the close of the *Politics*, that this hierarchy breaks down.[306] Proper judges, actors, authors, and composers are no longer respected as "low-grade flute players… drag the choral leader around when they perform…."[307]

In sum, the award-winning poet as *representative of the people*, the oligarch as the *financier of the citizen chorus*, the protagonist as *leader of the drama*, and the voice of the herald who stands *outside of the polyphony* all indicate the presence of a new and very different kind of authorship at this time. The poetics of a single voice, speaking

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[302] On the role of the *khoregos*, see Foley, 11, on the aristocracy as *khoregoi* or chorus leaders; Demosthenes says that the chorus leader became more important than the chorus itself (21.60); cf. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos*, 24; Peter Wilson, The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia, 13-4, 18 (on the new role for head men, as *khoregia*); Old Oligarch, *Constitution of the Athenians*, 13.

[303] See, for instance, Pl. *Resp.* 383c.

[304] Pl. *Leg.* 640a.

[305] Pl. *Leg.* 653e. See Pl. *Leg.* 2.

[306] Arist. *Pol.* 1341a37-1341b19.

[307] Arist. *Poet.* 1461b31-35. The Plutarch writes similarly: "…the flute-players, who were considered in the light of servants to the composers, [were] bound to conform scruptuously to their instructions[...]but…[after Lasos and others]…this subordination ceased." Or, as the conservative poet Pratinas puts it more obstinately, "It is for me to make the noise, like a swan leading the many-feathered song. The song is the queen appointed by the Muse, let the flute dance afterwards. For it is the servant." Cf. Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyrambic Tragedy and Comedy*, 17; Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia,* 20, 130.

over and above the various voices of the crowd and the citizen chorus, announced the soul of a hero that was better than and distinct from the people. This poetic hero quickly had unequal influence on the Assembly and came to be viewed as the *voice of the people*.[308]

X. The Voice of the People: The Poetics of the Aristocracy

> Euripides succeeded in transporting the spectator onto the stage…. Through him the common man found his way from the auditorium to the stage. That mirror, which previously had shown only the great and bold features, now took on the kind of accuracy that reflects also the paltry traits of nature…. From now on the stock phrases to represent everyday affairs were ready to hand. While hitherto the character of dramatic speech had been determined by the demigod in tragedy and the drunken satyr in comedy, that bourgeois mediocrity in which Euripides placed all his political hopes now came to the fore. And so the Aristophanic Euripides could pride himself on having portrayed life 'as it really is'…. The truth of the matter is that no Greek artist ever treated his audience with greater audacity and self-sufficiency than Euripides; who at a time when the multitude lay prostrate before him disavowed in noble defiance and publicly his own tendencies — those very tendencies by which he had previously conquered the masses. [Euripides did not have] the slightest reverence for that band of Bedlamites called the public…. Euripides…considered himself quite superior to the crowd as a whole….
>
> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*[309]

In the late 5th and 4th Centuries, the poetics of polyphony — the choral performance of singular, equally important voices — was increasingly given over to a poetics of *monody*, that is, a poetics in which one or more individual speakers would *lead* the drama. This new poetics was one of increased individualism, merit, or worth — a culture of the self that distinguished oneself over and against others.

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[308] Nietzsche puts it this way in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "The new dramatists tried to resolve the tragic dissonance in terrestrial terms: after having been sufficiently buffeted by fate, the hero was compensated in the end by a distinguished marriage and divine honors. He thus resembled a gladiator...." Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Golffing translation, 107.

[309] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Golffing translation, 70-1; 73-4.

Nietzsche suggests that poets like Euripides were endowing their protagonists with views that allowed them to rise in importance themselves. Alternatively, as scholars have suggested, it may simply have been the attempt of poets to represent the loss of democratic consensus in Athens by the end of the disastrous Peloponnesian War. Whatever the case may be, for our study it is most important to observe this transition in the poetics of the theater itself.

Consider, for instance, the shift from Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women* — in which the *dēmos* is sovereign and the chorus has the most lines of any extent play — to Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, in which, as Nicole Loraux writes, the *dēmos* is "no longer all-powerful except in name, reduced in fact to approving decisions already taken by Theseus…."[310] This transition in which monody is increased and the chorus becomes increasingly irrelevant, is widely evident and especially pronounced in the late tragedies and comedies of Euripides and Aristophanes.[311]

As Nietzsche writes, "Already in Sophocles we find some embarrassment with regard to the chorus, which suggests that the Dionysiac floor of tragedy is beginning to give way. Sophocles no longer dares to give the chorus the major role in the tragedy but treats it as almost on the same footing as the actors, as though it had been raised from the *orchestra* to the *scene*…. This shift in attitude, which Sophocles displayed not only in practice but also, we are told, in theory, was the first step toward the total disintegration of the chorus: a process whose rapid changes we can follow in Euripides, Agathon, and New Comedy."[312]

The first change to occur in the poetics of tragedy was the emergence of speech — speech that was distinct from the voice or *phōnē* of the chorus.[313] As Aristotle writes in the *Poetics*, the emergence of speech distinguishes someone from the singing

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[310] Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, 260.

[311] Helene Foley, "Choral Identity in Greek Tragedy," Classical Philology 98 no. 1 (January 2003), 8.

[312] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Golffing translation, 89.

[313] Arist. *Poet.* 1447a20-1447b1.

voices of the chorus and simultaneously creates in this person a leader.[314] Thus speech for Aristotle brings not only a principle actor or protagonist, but, along with it, heroic narratives, aristocratic sentiments, or simply a poetics in which not every voice is equal. But even for Aristotle, the poetics of Euripides signaled a drastic shift away from the chorus and the people entirely: "[T]he chorus ought to be conceived as one of the actors and part of the whole, sharing in the action, not as in Euripides but as in Sophocles."[315]

The secret, however, is what this shift in poetics tells us about Athenian democracy. A similar poetics emerges at the same time or shortly thereafter in Athens' "democratic" Assembly. The leading figures in the Assembly became known not only as *dēmagōges* ("those who lead the demos"), but also as *hoi legontai* (the speakers) or as the *kratista legon* (the most able speaker).[316] One orator and politician, Demosthenes, explains that "the majority…are not expected to be able to speak in the same way as the cleverest orators"[317] and should therefore "listen in silence" to their "advisors."[318] Likewise, Gorgias' *Encomium to Helen* suggests that not only are the people unable to speak the *logos*; they are not even able to understand or make a judgment on the *logos* when they hear it.

Xenophon explains that the presence of workers shoemakers, blacksmiths, farmers, etc. makes the Assembly "a gathering of the most stupid and weak people" who are not gifted at speaking.[319] And what Thucydides' Pericles, for instance, calls the proper occasion of *logos* is an occasion when "some man of known ability and high reputation, chosen by the city, delivers a suitable oration over them; after which the

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[314] Arist. *Poet.* 4.

[315] Arist. *Poetics* 1456a25-7. Sachs translation.

[316] See Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite In Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People*, 106.

[317] Demosthenes, *Proemion* 45. Cf. Mackie, ed. *Oral Performance and its Context*, 132.

[318] Demosthenes, *Proemion* 26.1; 56.3. Cf. Mackie, ed. *Oral Performance and its Context*, 137.

[319] Xen. *Mem.* 3.7.6.

people depart.[320] Although the institutions and the name remain the same, the poetics of Athens' democratic Assembly and festivals was clearly no longer a poetics of democratic consensus and equal say in the agora. The institutions remain "democratic" in name, but the poetics of this time suggest *how* oligarchy began to be *performed* under the name democracy in Athens.

When Thucydides' Pericles attempts to define Athenian democracy in his famous *Funeral Oration*, for instance, Thucydides tells us that under Pericles what was defined (*logō*) as a democracy was in deed (*ergō*) a government (*archē*) by the first man.[321] He notes that Pericles delivers his oration from a high and lofty stage so as to speak over and above a silent people.[322] The poetics of Pericles' speech — a mass of silent spectators being lead by a first man — may seem to belie democracy. But the implication that a different form of government existed under the name or sign of "democracy" was common in the late 5th and 4th century.[323] As Plato writes in the *Menexenus* — Plato's dialogue on Pericles' *Funeral Oration* — "Some call it democracy,"

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[320] Thuc. 2.43.2, 2.34.6-7. We find aristocratic descriptions of *logos* throughout Thucydides' *History*, such as when he describes the logos spoken at the funeral oration as when "some man of known ability and high reputation, chosen by the city, delivers a suitable oration over them; after which the people depart… in order that he might be heard as far as possible by the multitude…" [Thuc. 2.43.2; 2.34.6-8. See also Mackie, ed. *Oral Performance and Its Context*, 132, on Thuc. 1.145 saying "this was Pericles' speech. The Athenians considered that his advice was best and voted as he had asked them to vote."

[321] Thuc. 2.65.9. A claim that may present Thucydides' own wishes rather than a factual account.

[322] Thuc. 2.43.2; 2.34.6-8. Thucydides tells us that all the Athenians who were gathered to honor the dead remained silent except Pericles. Moreover, Thucydides tells us that at the conclusion of Pericles speeches that the assembled Athenians decided how to respond silently (Thuc. 1.145, 2.65). On this silence, see John G. Zumbrunnen, *Silence and Democracy: Athenian Politics in Thucydides' History* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 4. For the silence of an audience as a sign of disapproval or fear, see Bruno Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century*, trans. A. Thomas Cole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 26; and John G. Zumbrunnen, *Silence and Democracy: Athenian Politics in Thucydides' History*, 1, 4, 19. Cf. Silvia Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 153.

[323] Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens,* 261.

says Plato, "others whatever name they please, but it is in reality [*tei aletheiai*] government by the elite with the approval of the crowd."[324]

As we will see in the next chapter, the birth of *logos* as an aristocratic or oligarchic or even sovereign status or authority found its way easily into the 4th century political thought of Plato and Aristotle. Still, while we know that despite the *logos* of leading aristocrats in the late 5th and 4th centuries — that is, the privilege of political elite and professionally trained rhetoricians in the assembly — the experience of *disquiet,* of people shouting to halt the proceedings of the officials, was also a common phenomenon in the 5th and 4th centuries. As Xenophon writes, "The People did, on occasion, override the will of the officials conducting the meetings, as when, in the late 5th century, the Prytaneis were unwilling to allow a vote, the People overrode them with menacing shouts.[325] As Demosthenes tells us, a polyphony of voices in the crowd "raised a clamor" and "refused to hear" the speaker[326]; they shouted them down from the platform, as Aeschines says[327], laughed at them, which is perhaps where we get the expression to "laugh someone off the stage."[328] The polyphony of voice was also the danger that the anti-democratic politician Demosthenes feared when he begged the multitude "to withstand your jeers,"[329] to "listen in silence,"[330] to "not get rid of speeches with heckling,"[331] or "raise uproar."[332]

What is at issue more broadly is a period. Plato writes his critique of bare voices or "uncouth yelling" in the *Laws* precisely during this time. And just as the word *logos* had come to describe elevated or exceptional speech, Plato's account of the Athenian revolution describes a people that used their bare voices. The spectators

[324] Pl. *Menex.* 238d1-2.
[325] Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.14.
[326] Demosthenes 19.112-3.
[327] Aeschines 1.33.
[328] Dem. 19.23; Plut. *Dem.*6.3.
[329] Dem. *Proemion*, 5. On Demosthenes' *Proemion* see Mackie, ed. *Oral Performance and its Context*, 132.
[330] Dem. *Proemion*, 56.3.
[331] Dem. *Proemion*, 56.3.
[332] Dem. *Proemion*, 26.1.

(*theatra*), once silent (*aphōnos*), "became vocal" or began to use their voices (*phōnēeis*).[333] They began to show approval or disapproval with applause or "catcalls and uncouth yelling."[334] This "gave the ordinary man not only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge."[335] As spectators assumed the role of participants and judges, the practices of equality, community, and participation took root. Instead of a musical aristocracy (*aristokratia*), a vicious "theatrocracy" (*theatrokratia*) arose in which rule was exercised collectively by the spectators in the theater.[336] They began to presume their voices to be equal to the speech (*logos*) of the rulers once more, manifesting themselves visibly and audibly in a growing public "chorus."

[333] *LSJ* 1967.
[334] Pl. *Leg*. 701c.
[335] Pl. *Leg*. 700e.
[336] Pl. *Leg*. 701a.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BIRTH OF REPRESENTATION

AND THE INVENTION OF THE BARE VOICE

> [E]ach and every assembly and gathering for any purpose should invariably have a leader…
>
> Plato, *Laws*[337]

> [T]he next and necessary step…is to choose some representatives to review the rules of all the families, and to propose openly to the leaders and heads of people the "kings," so to speak the adoption of those rules that particularly recommend themselves for common use. These representatives will be known as the lawgivers, and by appointing the leaders as officials they will create out of the separate autocracies a sort of aristocracy, or perhaps kingship.
>
> Plato, *Laws*[338]

> The people that is subject to the laws ought to be their author. But how will they regulate these conditions? [...] Does the body politic have an organ to enunciate its will? Who will give it the necessary foresight to formulate acts and publish them in advance, or how will it pronounce them in time of need? How will a blind multitude, which often does not know what it wants because it rarely knows what is good for it, execute by itself an undertaking as vast and as difficult as a system of legislation? By itself, the people always wants the good, but by itself it does not always see it. The general will is always right, but the judgment that guides it is not always enlightened…. The [public] must be taught to know what it wants…. From this arises the necessity for a legislator.
>
> Rousseau, *Social Contract*[339]

I. *Logos*: The Logic of Sovereignty

During a wave of neoliberalism in the 1980s, Michel Foucault spent the last years of his life studying a historical period that was similar to his own. Foucault

[337] Pl. *Leg.* 640a.
[338] Arist. *Pol.* 681c-e.
[339] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 154.

observes that distinctions between equals in Athens' democracy begin to be inscribed and justified in the late 5th Century on the basis of one's ability in language.[340] As Foucault writes, "[T]rue discourse introduces something completely different and irreducible to the egalitarian structure of democracy."[341] Although everybody can speak (i.e. *isēgoria*), democracy in the late 5th Century becomes "indexed to the *logos* of truth" and "only a few can tell the truth."[342] "[O]nce only a few can tell the truth," Foucault continues, "a difference is produced [in the field of democracy] which is that of the ascendancy exercised by some over others."[343]

Foucault's analysis has proven three irreversible facts about philosophy's role in the development of democracy — three facts that undergird our present politics at their deepest or most radical roots. First, the linguistic division between the voices of the many and the *logos* of the few was utilized by the aristocrats in Athens as the future of direct democracy was being decided. Second, the pillar and cornerstone of Greek philosophy, proper political speech or *logos*, was not, as many have argued, an equalizer that allowed for equal and rational speakers; it was a direct confrontation with *isēgoria* or the equality of speech and it amounted to the invention of sovereignty.[344] Finally, as *logos* and speech were instituted as proper forms of

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[340] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège De France 1982-1983*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 200; Pl. *Resp*. 3.

[341] Ibid.,184.

[342] Ibid.,174, 183-4

[343] Ibid.

[344] See for instance, Pl. *Leg*. 756e-757a: "A system of selection like that will effect a compromise between a monarchical and a democratic constitution, which is precisely the sort of compromise a constitution should always be. You see, even if you proclaim that a master and his slave shall have equal status, friendship between them is inherently impossible." As the Athenian says elsewhere, "[E]ach and every assembly and gathering for any purpose should invariably have a leader…" (Pl. *Leg*. 640a). For Plato's Athenian, the aristocratic period in Athens democracy after the Battle of Salanis represents a return to a better, older pre-democratic constitution or an "ancient code of laws" (Pl. *Leg*. 698c, 699c). Aristotle also praises this aristocratic period as a time of excellence, modesty, and integrity (Arist. *Ath. Pol*. 23, 25).

participating in "mixed" or representative democracy, a second class of voices were excluded, and even invented, by the same stroke.

The idea of *sovereignty* as being born out of *logos* is especially common in the middle of the 4th Century BCE in the political works of Plato and Aristotle. At first, Plato's hope for a new politics is wagered on the possibility of an outstanding monarch. But by Plato's later political philosophy in the middle of the 4th Century, Plato abandons his hope for a monarch and introduces one of the most crucial ideas of Western politics: the idea of a legislator who would stand before or outside of the law in order to found laws through his speech.

The Western representative Republic is founded from Plato's *Laws* to Rousseau's *Social Contract*, where the person with exceptional speech is named a *legislator* and given sovereign power in order to found laws. Plato's later political thought and Aristotle's ethical and political thought give those with *logos* exceptional rule over others in order to found good laws. In short, *logos* is what creates hierarchy in a city of equals. In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, for example, this legislator must go before others to found the initial laws for the city and corresponding, good habits for the self. The new figure of the legislator has a dutiful aim: to form a middle or mixed government, that is, one that is neither too authoritarian nor too liberal, a blend between authoritarianism and excessive or participatory democracy.

Even when this sort of government finds a home in the founding ideas of the modern democratic republic, sovereignty is likewise defined as someone with exceptional speech. The idea of a sovereign political figure emerges in the Rousseau's *Social Contract* as a figure who not only stands prior to the State and above the law, but as someone who has exceptional speech.[345] For example, despite initially describing sovereignty or the general will as being composed of "as many members as

[345] Rousseau's major political work, the *Social Contract*, and his major work on language, the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, are sent off for review in the same year, 1761. See Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* xi; Rousseau, *Social Contract,* x.

there are voices in the assembly,"[346] Rousseau later describes the need for a "guide" for the "blind multitude," an "organ to enunciate its will," or an "extraordinary man" to "pronounce" its will for it.[347] The role of the sovereign legislator is decidedly logocentric: a legislator is necessary to "enunciate" or "pronounce" what is sovereign for people who don't know what is best for themselves

Additionally, if we read Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* closely alongside the *Social Contract*, the figure of the legislator is, in fact, a poet who sings out the laws at the *archē* or very beginning of the state.[348] As Rousseau writes, "…the first laws were in verse" and "sung."[349] Rousseau reminds us in a footnote that in Greek the word *nomos* may mean both song and law.[350] It is likely that Rousseau, like Plato in the *Laws*, has Solon, the ancient poet-legislator in mind, whose songs or laws serve as the basis for Plato's book by the same name, the *Laws* (*Nomoi*). Indeed, much like the *Laws*, the original, sung laws in the *Essay* represent the pure origin of language itself before language and music degenerated.

But this logic of sovereignty, in order to exist as sovereign, must also exclude the many as it catapults a few. Thus a line is drawn; a binary is forged; a distinction is inscribed between *song*, on the one hand, and the voice without discourse, or *noise*. This distinction makes way for a political division in Rousseau between the multitude, which turns out to be "blind," and those whom Rousseau names representatives or "officers of the sovereign."

The late political thought of Plato, the ethical and political works of Aristotle, and Rousseau's writings on language and politics all share a similar goal: they create a sovereign legislator and representatives out of those who they consider to have the capacity for *logos*. The representative in a mixed government is an iteration in the long arc of sovereignty or *archē* associated with the *logos*. As Schmitt defines this figure

[346] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 139.
[347] Ibid., 154.
[348] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 318.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid., 577.

later in his *Political Theology*, this figure of "the sovereign stands outside of the juridical order and, nevertheless, belongs to it, since it is up to him to decide if the constitution is to be suspended *in toto*…"[351] Or, as Giorgio Agamben has translated it, "I, the sovereign, who am outside of the law, declare that there is nothing outside of the law."[352]

What we wish to point out in this second chapter is, firstly, that this logic of sovereignty is based more fundamentally on the logic of extraordinary speech. And, secondly, that for Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau alike, this extraordinary speech can only be born out of an exclusion of others based on their lesser speech. In other words, those with exceptional speech are given exceptional power, but only because those with fair or mediocre speech are placed in the margins of a new philosophical distinction between those who should rule and those who should be ruled. What is presented is a philosophy of exceptional speech and extraordinary power that can only be achieved through exclusion or, to be more precise, the inclusion of bare voices who are excluded from power insofar as they will be ruled by those with the *logos*. The very distinction of sovereign speech requires the participation of both.

II. The Culture of Ascendency

Michel Foucault reminds us that, as a genealogy, his late study of Athens is not an heroic account of a particular philosopher, a faithful exegesis of a philosophical text, or an ahistorical or systematic analysis of an *a priori* idea. Rather, what is stake is what he calls the birth of a historical *period*.[353] Foucault devotes his lectures to analyzing the period of Athens' democracy in the years immediately preceding Plato's *Republic* and into the birth of a political philosophy based on *logos*. Foucault,

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[351] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 15.

[352] Ibid.

[353] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 174. Foucault reminds us that ultimately the analysis of democracy concerns a historical period.

seemingly taking Nietzsche's analysis of Euripides and Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy* as his point of departure, will discuss this period as marked by what he calls a "culture of the self" and "ascendency."

In the late 5th Century BCE Athens, Foucault suggests, there is a battle in democratic Athens between equality, on the one hand, and ascendancy and authority, on the other.[354] It is a debate between *isēgoria*, on the one hand, and what Foucault will initially call *parrēsia*, on the other a notion that Foucault claims may introduce differentiation and hierarchy rather than the equality of each speaker. It is a disagreement between Cleon, the democrat, who thought that everyone should have *parrēsia*, and, on the other hand, the aristocratic movement around Nicias, who thought that *parrēsia* should be reserved to an elite.[355] More generally, it was the period at the end of the Peloponnesian War when a dispute ensues between supporters of a radical democracy and supporters of a moderate democracy or an aristocratic return.[356]

Foucault analyzed the notion of *parrēsia* or free speech in ancient Greek thought and political life from 1981 until his death in 1984.[357] Yet although the word is defined as "the freedom to speak and to speak out freely,"[358] it soon becomes evident, particularly in his 1982-3 lectures, that the word becomes intertwined with the birth of a particular concept of *logos* in ancient Greek democracy that is inherited and revised by philosophy. Foucault shows that, despite the rhetoric of equality and equal speech (*isēgoria*) in Athenian democracy, the notion of *parrēsia* and logos in the late 5th Century came to mean a way of speaking that could distinguish some citizens from others and allows these citizens to ascend over the masses. In other words, if the

[354] Ibid., 105.
[355] Ibid.106.
[356] Ibid. 174.
[357] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982*, trans., ed., Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), 71.
[358] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others,* 152.

democratic word *isēgoria* referred to equality, namely the equal right of everyone to speak in the assembly and the agora, *parrēsia* and *logos* came to refer to the one or the few who spoke in such a way that allowed them to be superior over others and exercise command in the city.[359]

On what is this difference between the proper ruler and the proper ruled based? It is firstly the difference between exceptional speech or logos and the everyday voices of the many. In a politics in which everyone has equal voice, it is the emergence of true discourse, that is, *parrēsia* or *logos*, which re-introduces a difference between the proper ruler and the ruled, between the superior and the inferior, between the aristocracy and the radical democrats.[360] As Foucault writes, "[T]rue discourse introduces something completely different and irreducible to the egalitarian structure of democracy."[361] Although everybody can speak (i.e. *isēgoria*), democracy in the late 5th Century becomes "indexed to the *logos* of truth" and "only a few can tell the truth."[362] "[O]nce only a few can tell the truth," Foucault continues, "a difference is produced [in the field of democracy] which is that of the ascendancy exercised by some over others."[363] And this emergence of *logos* and *parrēsia* over *isēgoria*, this language of ascendancy over equality, is at least in some part the new hope of an oligarchy or an aristocracy unsettled with somewhat radical, Athenian equality at least for those lucky enough to be Athenian citizens and male.[364]

The new savior of political life, *logos*, will "make possible the proper direction of the city through the exercise of ascendancy…" or the proper recognition of those fit for rule.[365] Although we are decades before Plato's philosophy introduces a noble way

[359] Ibid.173-4.
[360] Ibid. 204.
[361] Ibid.184.
[362] Ibid.174, 183-4
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid. 204.
[365] Ibid. 200.

of speaking and connects it to proper rule in the polis, here Foucault finds the birth of his thought.

In placing the birth of the Greek "culture of the self" around the time of Thucydides, Euripides, and Plato, it seems as though Foucault is tracing the end of Nietzsche's genealogy of tragedy, which notes the end of the chorus and the emergence of a "culture of the self" through the writings of Euripides and Plato. Two of Foucault's genealogical analyses are especially exemplary in this regard, situating the relationship between *logos* and sovereignty into a late 5th Century context. The first discussion is Foucault's study of Euripides' *Ion*. "The question of *parrēsia*," writes Foucault, "corresponds to a historical problem, to an extremely precise political problem at the time when Euripides writes *Ion*."[366] Namely, it is the ability of the Euripides' *Ion* to found Athens and democracy himself through his discovery of the *logos*.[367] In the second example, the speeches of Thucydides' Pericles, Foucault shows that Pericles ability to exercise his rule in Athens is due to the fact that he is the most skillful and influential speaker in Athens.[368]

III. The Rulers and the Ruled

It is important to note that the intellectual and written theories that sought to define "democracy" appeared in the later 5th and 4th Centuries well after democratic procedures were developed and practiced widely.[369] The rise of theoretical speculation about democracy at this time can be, as Josiah Ober has argued, largely attributed to

[366] Ibid. 105.
[367] Ibid. 145.
[368] Ibid. 174.
[369] Moses I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 28; Jennifer Roberts, "The Creation of a Legacy: A Manufactured Crisis in Eighteenth-Century Thought," in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (1994): 84-5.

"an elite few who sought to gain a monopoly over political affairs."[370] These self-described attempts to define "democracy" in and through the *logos* – for example, Thucydides' *Funeral Oration*[371] or Book VIII of Plato's *Republic* – were at their time relatively new.[372] To offer a *logos* of a constitution, writes Plato, was to define a political system abstractly and apart from all its particular details.[373] It was to begin with one of the "names" in which the "idea of a regime…fits into some distinct form."[374] And it was, at least as Plato's craft and his word *hupograpsanta* (literally, to "trace" or "write over") suggests in Book VIII of *The Republic*, an attempt to provide a written account, to think politics in connection with writing, to set down a regime in writing.[375]

In Plato's *Republic*, like in many of the 4th century written definitions of democracy, democracy is a corrupt regime that should be put on trial. Its most crippling crime is that it lacks an aristocratic distinction between *the rulers and the ruled*.[376] The city first plummets into democracy, says Plato, when the "rulers and the ruled…come alongside each other" so that the city is eventually "anarchic" or "without rulers" (*anarchos*), offering "equality to equals and unequals alike."[377] This definition of democracy as a city "without rulers" (*anarchos*) recalls other Greeks such as Herodotus, for example, who wrote that equality was the "wish neither to rule nor

[370] Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent*, 4.

[371] Thucydides describes Pericles oration on democracy as one of *logos* (Thuc. 2.43.2); Plato describes the discussion of political constitutions in Book VIII as "outlining a regime's figure in speech and not working out its details precisely…" (Pl. *Resp*. 548d).

[372] On the city built in *logos*, see especially Pl. *Resp*. 369a; 369c; 592 a-b. On the *ergon* related to philosophical education, particularly of Glaucon, see John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 401.

[373] Pl. *Resp*. 544c

[374] Pl. *Resp*. 544c

[375] Pl. *Resp*. 544c. Note the parallel between the legislator in the *Statesman* as someone who writes down laws like a doctor who leaves prescriptions for his patients.

[376] Pl. *Resp*. 556c-556e; 558c; 562d-e; *Laws* 701b.

[377] Pl. *Resp.* 556c; *Pl. Resp.* 558c.

to be ruled."[378] Or, as Hannah Arendt writes elsewhere, for the Greeks, "Equality…meant to be free from the inequality present in rulership and to move in a sphere where neither rule nor being ruled existed."[379]

What is it, then, for Plato, that must inaugurate or uphold this division between the proper rulers and the ruled? The words that Plato uses for the "rulers" and "ruled" are based on the Greek word *archē*, a word that means simultaneously an *origin*, *principle*, or *sovereignty*. *Archē*, then, is an exceptional word to describe sovereignty: it means origin in the sense of a beginning or a metaphysical foundation, and yet also describes an exceptional power, authority, or sovereign. *Archē*, as Hannah Arendt writes, is both to begin and to rule, both commencement and commandment; it is the commandment of the one who commences.[380] But ultimately, writes Jacques Rancière, Plato's *archē* is a deliberate disagreement with democracy. It is an order in which "…[t]here are governors and governed, men who exercise the *archē* and men who submit to its authority."[381]

This *archē* is founded or constructed more fundamentally in the *Republic* through exceptional speech or *logos*. Here, we are reminded of Foucault's genealogy and our work in the last chapter, which tells us that this notion of extraordinary speech would not have been very unique among the aristocrats or the oligarchs of Plato's period. For Plato, likewise, sovereign power is bound up in a distinction in speech. The city itself must "[come] into being in speech" from *out o*f the *archē*, writes Plato. They must "create a city in logos from the beginning" (*logō ek archēs*), suggesting

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[378] Hdt. 3, 83. in Herodotus, *Herodotus: The Histories*, trans. Aubrey De Sélincourt (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1954).

[379] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 33. More recently, Jacques Rancière has invoked this description of democracy to criticize a democracy in which representatives and elite interests are a disguised form of oligarchic rule based on a division between the proper rulers and the ruled (Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 27-31; Cf. Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Hatred of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2007).

[380] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 177.

[381] Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Hatred of Democracy*, 39.

in the Greek that logos comes *out of* the metaphysical *archē* itself and remains tied to it.[382]

The origin and sovereign of the city, then, is founded or constructed in and through the *logos*. This *logos* will also provide the basis for the division between the ruler and the ruled. Logos, then, coming out of the proper origin and sovereignty of *archē*, determines both the origin of the city and the sovereignty of its ruler.

Thus the proper guardians (the police, the military, future rulers, etc.) are educated in exceptional speech (logos) from the time they are children[383]; the education is ultimately for the guardians[384] and ultimately based on logos.[385] Those who show themselves to possess this speech or logos will be "appointed ruler of the city and guardian…given honors, both while living and when dead, and…allotted the greatest prizes in burial and the other memorials."[386] In sum, the city of the *Republic* is not only built through *archē*; it is built through exceptional speech or *logos* by way of a certain poetics. The introduction of extraordinary speech is simultaneous with the inauguration of a sovereign ruling class.

Democracy, by contrast, disturbs the order of discourse at its first principle, that is, at the place of *archē* itself. It makes the city "anarchic" (*anarchos*) or without an *archē*.[387] This is because the democrats "share the regime and the ruling offices (*archōn*)…on an equal basis…and, for the most part…by lot."[388] Ultimately, "True

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[382] Pl. *Resp.* 369c.

[383] Pl. *Resp.* 376b-d.

[384] Pl. *Resp.* 398b.

[385] Pl. *Resp.* 398d; 400d; 412b; 413e-414a.

[386] Pl. *Resp.* 413e-414a. "If a man appears hard to bewitch and graceful in everything, a good guardian of himself and the music he was learning, proving himself to possess rhythm and harmony [both of which are based on the *logos*, *Pl. Resp.* 400d] on all these occasions such a man would certainly be most useful to himself and the city. And the one who on each occasion…is tested and comes through untainted, must be appointed ruler of the city and guardian…," Pl. *Resp.* 413d.

[387] Pl. *Resp*. 558c; 560e; 562e.

[388] Pl. *Resp*. 557a. Likewise in the *Laws*, the democrats "refused to submit to the authorities" and set "the ordinary man…up as a capable judge," Pl. *Leg.* 700e-701b.

speech" (*logos*) is no longer admitted, no longer honored or even "let into the guardhouse."[389]

As Rancière writes, for Plato democracy "is a specific break with the logic of the *archē*" whereby there is "the complete absence of any entitlement to govern."[390] But ultimately, democracy and language are bound to the same fate. Democracy is the deconstruction of the *archē*, but only because it is simultaneously the removal of the division or order in language.

Finally, it would a mistake to think that this division is only about political rule and language. It is also, of course, about political economy. As Aristotle writes, "where the poor rule, that is a democracy."[391] In a democracy, as the Pseudo-Xenophon or "Old Oligarch" writes, "The poor and the common people…have more power than the noble and the rich…."[392] In Plato's *Republic*, the birth of democracy occurs from out of an oligarchy, but only because in the increasing degeneration democracy is lower than oligarchy. Plato's hatred for democracy or "anarchy," in other words, is even worse.

IV. The Order of Discourse

Plato's *Republic* institutes a form of sovereignty through exceptional speech. Yet this speech can only be deemed exceptional for Plato if there is another kind of speech that is deemed common.[393] And this is the logic of distinction or division out of which sovereignty is born: At the same time that the excellent manner in which the guardians speak determines power and sovereignty in the city, a certain kind of

[389] Pl. *Resp*. 560d; 561b.

[390] Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 30-31.

[391] Arist. *Pol*. 1280a1-5.

[392] Old Oligarch, *Constitution of Athens*, 11.

[393] From Heraclitus to Heidegger, this exceptional speech is distinguished from what philosophers call everyday talk, common chatter, or even gossip.

speech also determines those who are excluded from power or political participation. In Plato's *Republic*, it is the speech of those others who do not manifest the *logos* at the end of the Book III and are placed into lower classes by way of a myth. In Aristotle's *Politics*, it is a distinction at the opening of the *Politics* between those who have the *logos* and those who have mere *phōnē* or voice. The implication is always the same: those without the *logos* have no business in politics.

What interests us in this chapter, however, is not the quality of *logos* that Plato and Aristotle enact in their political thought, but the *speech* that gets *excluded* in this logic of sovereignty. If *logos* is what defines the sovereignty of a few rulers or even one ruler in the city, then what is the nature of the speech that is *a priori* excluded from the origin and rule of the city?

Since the *logos* of the sovereign is first developed in the section on musical education in Books II and III of the *Republic*, we will look there to find specific types of speech that do not conform to the *logos* or the laws of music. What follows in the next four sections is a discussion of four kinds of speech that are excluded in Books II and III of Plato's *Republic*. In order to construct the *archē* through the order of *logos*, these four kinds of bare voices are distinguished from the *logos* and excluded from rule: first, the dramatic or literary *persona* that acts or speaks in voices other than one's own; second, the *tenderness of voice*, which has the quality of tenderness or femininity and is viewed in contrast to speech fit for "boys and men"; third, the *grain* of the voice, the physical or material voice in the throat that cannot be reduced back to the metaphysical or even calculative qualities of *logos*; and finally, a form of voice that Plato associates with the many, theater, and *polyphōnia*.

These residents of the city are othered by a division in language between the *logos* and the bare voice [*phōnē*], or any sound, animal or human or natural, etc., that does not conform to the *logos*. To be sure, the bare voice is never an expression of the *logos* and thus falls outside of any "phonocentrism"; it is always a voice from

elsewhere. It is a kind of speech that is included in the city, but only because it must be excluded from rule or placed outside of the *archē*.

Part II: Voices in the Margins: The Logic of Sovereignty

I. The Voice of the Persona

> Each of us is several, is many, is a profusion of selves.
>
> Pessoa, Fragment[394]

> Are you not carried out of yourself, and does not your soul in an ecstasy seem to be among the persons and the places of which you are speaking, whether they are in Ithaca or in Troy or whatever may be the scene of the poem?
>
> Socrates, to Ion, in Plato's *Ion*

The first kind of speech that is excluded in the poetics of the *Republic* is the literary voice or *persona*. Plato criticizes poetry's impersonation or mimicry of a persona other than its own, such as when an actor pretends to be a character in a dramatic performance. To understand this phenomenon better we might think of modern examples like the theory of "method acting" in theater, in which an actress imagines that she actually becomes the persona of the character she acts. She wears period clothes her character wore. She eats only what her character ate, and so on. Or in poetry, we could think of writers who take on a persona in order to write a literary voice or even a heteronymn. In Fernando Pessoa's poetry, for instance, we are

[394] Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. Richard Zenith (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), ix. "And I wonder if my apparently negligible voice might not embody the essence of thousands of voices, the longing for self-expression of thousands of lives, the patience of millions of souls reigned like my own to their daily lot, their useless dreams, and their hopeless hopes."

confronted with what one commentator calls "disjointed voices belonging to different discourses, written in different languages coming under different names."[395] Pessoa himself describes his process like this:

> One day…I went over to a high desk and, taking a sheet of paper, began to write….I wrote thirty-odd poems straight off, in a kind of ecstasy whose nature I cannot define….I started with the title *The Keeper of Sheep*. And what followed was an apparition of somebody in me, to whom I immediately gave the name Alberto Caeiro.[396]

The experience of Pessoa being overcome by another persona in "a kind of ecstasy" is remarkably close to what Plato excludes from the *Republic*. The phenomenon that he prohibits is when someone "gives a speech as though he were someone else,"[397] as though he were "likening himself to someone else, either in voice or in looks…imitating the man he likens himself to…."[398] There is something about speaking in another voice breaking into a different register of speech, playing the role of another, losing one's own speech that is especially destructive to the order of the city.

But what is it about literary voices or dramatic personae that causes Plato to forbid them from the discourse of the *Republic*? Why would speaking in a strange voice threaten the harmony of the regime?[399] And why does Plato equate this poetic act with a lesser kind of person, saying that the "more common" a man is, the more he will speak in multiple voices or personae,[400] and that such poetry is more pleasing to "the great mob"?[401]

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[395] Zbigniew Kotowicz, *Fernando Pessoa: Voices of a Nomadic Soul* (Bristol, England: Shearsman Books, 2008), 15.

[396] Quoted in Zbigniew Kotowicz, *Fernando Pessoa: Voices of a Nomadic Soul* (Bristol, England: Shearsman Books, 2008), 40.

[397] Pl. *Resp.* 393a-c

[398] Pl. Resp. 393c.

[399] Pl. *Resp.* 397e.

[400] Pl. *Resp.* 396c; 397a.

[401] Pl. *Resp.* 397d.

The primary concern with the literary voice or persona is not, as it is in Book 10 of the *Republic*, that some will merely pass along words falsely without knowing truly what they mean. It more resembles the concerns of the *Ion* or the *Apology*: that one could "lose oneself" in the speech of another. But here in the *Republic*, as Jacques Rancière and Eric Havelock note, this threat of losing oneself amounts to a departure from one's state-given identity and thus a rupture in the harmony of the city.[402]

The context in which this exclusion occurs is when Plato is describing an education for future guardians. When Plato excludes the literary or dramatic voice he is introducing a formal notion of mimetic education. This education has the purpose instituting a certain discourse (*logos*) for the creation of a ruling class. And this ruling class is part of a broader system of distinctions between classes of citizens based on the state of their souls.

The proper ordering of these different classes is what Plato comes to call *harmonia* or harmony. In order for there to be harmony in the city, as Plato says, "each man does one thing."[403] In the city with harmony, "we'll find the shoemaker a shoemaker, and not a pilot along with his farming, and the skilled warrior a skilled warrior, and not a moneymaker along with his warmaking, and so on…"[404] In short, hierarchy in the city is dependent on each person doing only their job and no one else's. And this is necessary for the overall order or harmony of Plato's city.

But if "hierarchy first appears [in the *Republic*] as knowledge and regulation of the simulacrum,"[405] then speaking in a strange or alien voice risks destabilizing the individual's identity and hierarchy itself. As a psychoanalyst might say, it invites the eruption of something uncalled for, of something unintended, of getting lost of the

[402] Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, trans. John Drury, Corinne, Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 17, 25.

[403] Pl. *Resp.* 397e.

[404] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.

[405] Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, 17.

voice of the unconscious over and against conscious or rational speech.[406] As Havelock writes, acting in or imitating the voice of another not only threatens the conscious identity of the guardian for Plato; it also makes it possible for "unconscious layers of personality…[to] take over."[407] And because the state of the self is so connected to one's position in the city, becoming someone else also calls into question the division of labor that allots specific tasks to individuals on the basis of their soul.

The threat of the literary voice or person, for Rancière and Havelock, lies in the danger of people assuming other identities and alternate tasks. This literary voice or dramatic persona is found especially in the theater and "by the poets own report," he adds, especially in choral songs or "in dithyrambs."[408] In the end, Plato equates the imitation of poetic and theatric personae to the people or the many, saying that the "more common" a man is, the more he will speak in multiple voices or personae.[409] The voice of the persona, then, played out amongst the common people in the theater. For Plato this act of imitating the voice of another persona includes the whole of politics and the city.

Perhaps we can also discern something from the exclusion of *specific* personas by name that is, vocal imitations that are forbidden in particular in this section. First, the guardians must never imitate the voices of slaves or women, especially women who are ill or else in love, labor, or loss.[410] Secondly, the guardians must never imitate workers, or anyone exercising a kind of craft, such as the men rowing a ship.[411]

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[406] Richard Boothby, *Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology After Lacan* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 157.

[407] Havelock, Eric A. *Preface to Plato.* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1963), 157. This phenomenon becomes clearer to us through the work of psychoanalysts such as Jacques Lacan, for instance, who defined polyphony as that moment in speech where the voice of another, the unconscious, ruptured through normal speech.

[408] Pl. *Resp.* 394c.

[409] Pl. *Resp*. 396c; 397a.

[410] Pl. *Resp.* 395 d-e.

[411] Pl. *Resp.* 396a-b.

Lastly, they should never imitate nonhumans, especially animals or nature (such as the rustling of the trees).[412]

These are the specific voices that are excluded from the education in speech or *logos*. But what should we think when a parallel passage in Book VIII links democracy and anarchy to the equality of women, workers, slaves, foreigners, animals, and youth?[413]

In sum, Plato's *Republic* distinguishes between the dramatic or literary voice and "simple narrative [*diēgesis*]." One should never speak in someone else's voice but rather in the third person, always narrating a story in one's rational voice, and remaining within the broader master narrative of the city.[414] But Rancière extends this line of thought further and asks the following question about the workers: If the guardians are given *logos*, then what kind of ideology is instituted in the minds of those in the lower class? That is, if "the wisdom of the artisan is simply…the order of the state that puts him in his place," then "[h]ow do individuals get some idea in their heads that makes them either satisfied with their position or indignant about it?"[415]

II. The Tenderness of the Voice

> "And she cried out a sharp, piercing cry,
> like a bird come back to an empty nest,
> peering into its bed, and all the babies gone…"
>
> -Antigone, in Sophocles' *Antigone*, trans. Robert Fagles, 470-474

In addition to the literary voice, a distinct kind of *affective* or *emotional* voice is excluded from the mimetic education of the *Republic*. At issue *precisely here* is not yet the gentleness of the soul itself, but rather the affective character of poetic song upon

[412] Pl. *Resp.* 396b.
[413] Pl. *Resp*. 562e-563c.
[414] Pl. *Resp*. 393c.
[415] Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, xxvi, 25.

the soul.[416] The basic problem might be called in German *die Stimmung des Stimme* [the mood or tone of the voice]. It is close to what Merleau-Ponty describes when he speaks of "the emotional content of a word" that is "all important in poetry."[417] It is especially near to Heidegger's first lecture course devoted specifically to poetry, in which he attempts to explain how "The grounding attunement (*Grundstimmung*) carries and, in attuning defines (*trägt und be-stimmt*) the path of poetic saying"[418] or, as Heidegger puts it later, a kind of "intoxication…of mood wherein a single voice can be heard that sets a tone."[419]

Plato has specific affects in mind for exclusion, however. Just like the distinct personas that are especially dangerous to the city, Plato tells us that the "greatest accusation" against poetry and theater is that the two kinds of vocalized emotions that it produces, namely mourning and laughter.[420] These two affects of the voice are connected with the experience of pleasure and pain.[421] And they are, of course, primarily attached to the theater.

What is especially objectionable about poetry, says Plato, is that one becomes "too soft (*malakos*) to resist pleasures and pains"[422] in this case, "suffering along with a hero in all seriousness"[423], or laughing until you "[want] to make jokes" yourself.[424] There will be no "crying and lamenting," that is, no vocal mourning in Plato's city.[425] And there we be no "laughter" no "unquenchable laughter."[426]

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[416] Pl. *Resp*. 411a.

[417] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), 187.

[418] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's 'Hymnen' und 'Der Rhein,'* ed. Suzamme Ziegler, Gesamtausgabe, Band 39 (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1989), 95.

[419] Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000), 142.

[420] Pl. *Resp*. 605c.

[421] Pl. *Resp*. 556b; 605c.

[422] Pl. *Resp*. 556 b-c.

[423] Pl. *Resp*. 605d.

[424] Pl. *Resp*. 606c.

[425] Pl. *Resp*. 388b.

[426] Pl. *Resp*. 388e-389a.

Because these two vocalized emotions are primarily experienced in the tragedies and comedies of Greek poetry, here, once again, we are drawn back to the fact that poetry and theater, not democracy, is the more originary prohibition in Plato's city.

Perhaps it is the roaring laughter of the audience at the satires of Aristophanes that Plato has in mind, or else something like the suffering cry of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Yet this voice for Plato is always tied to the state of the city. It is something like Antigone, for instance, who simultaneously screams "a sharp, piercing cry" and commits an act that is described as "anarchy."[427] She not only "bursts into a long, shattering wail" and buries her brother; at one and the same time, "she destroys cities" and commits "anarchy"; she confuses the distinction between the edict of the King and the voice of an inferior woman.[428] And her voice, after all, is contagious. As Sophocles puts it, "The day comes soon," Tiresias tells Creon, "…when the mourning cries for men and women break throughout your halls."[429]

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But alongside these two affects in the theater mourning and laughter Plato is especially concerned in these passages about the specific affect of softness or tenderness, or what amounts to a certain notion of femininity. The passage warns of a kind of poetic "song," or simply an excessive amount of poetic song, which makes the guardians too gentle or soft.[430] While Plato explains elsewhere in the sections on *mimēsis* that "softness" may refer to both a disposition of the soul[431] or to various modes of music,[432] his concern here is caught up specifically with language in how

[427] Soph. *Ant.* 470, 751. Fagles translation.
[428] Ibid., 474, 750.
[429] Ibid., 1200.
[430] Pl. *Resp*. 411a.
[431] Pl. *Resp*. 400d-e, 410c-e.
[432] Pl. *Resp*. 398e.

poetic song will affect the guardians' speech or *logos*, or whether this song will conform to the *logos*.[433]

What does Plato mean by the affect of tenderness or softness, specifically as it is associated with poetic language, and why does he exclude it from the poetics of the city in these passages? At least in these specific passages on *mimēsis* in the *Republic*, "softness" is not a virtue; it is not the gentle soul that resists strong emotions in the *Republic*[434] or counters the Bacchic frenzy of the Muse in the *Phaedrus*.[435] It is a delicate- or sweet-toned sound which causes the soul to assume the same sweet or soft disposition.[436] It is a like manner of tenderness in music, in speech, and in the soul. And, as we will see, it is for whatever reason equated with democracy and with the theater.

Plato remarks throughout the passages on poetics that his concern with "softness" has to do with his guardians being ready for war. The "sweet, soft…harmonies" are excluded in particular because over time they make the guardian "a feeble warrior."[437] Here again we find that this affect is not purely psychological or instinctual, but rather is caught up with language and speech. After banning the "the soft (*malakos*) modes" for poetic odes and songs, Socrates says, "Just leave that mode which would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents of a man who is courageous in warlike deeds and every violent work." He adds, "And…leave another mode for a man who performs a peaceful deed."[438] Plato's focus is to make sure that the "sounds and accents of a man" are appropriately strong not too coarse or tough, but especially and even more so not too soft.

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[433] Pl. *Resp*. 398d, 400d, 411e. Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Plato the Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period*, vol. 4 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 453.

[434] Pl. *Resp*. 387e.

[435] Pl. *Phdr.* 245a.

[436] Pl. *Resp*. 411a-b.

[437] Pl. *Resp*. 411a-b.

[438] Pl. *Resp*. 399a-b.

The discussion concerning the accents and the sounds of a man who goes to war is closely tied to a further reason that the poetics of "softness" is excluded: the way in which poetry affects the spirited part of the soul. The repetition of these tough "sounds and accents" will be "practiced continually from youth onwards" so as to "become established in habits and nature, in body and sounds and in thought."[439]

What is being described is something like a military cadence that shapes the soul for war. One of the goals of this mimetic education is to ensure that the "spirited part of their nature (soul)" remains courageous. This spirited part, as Guthrie writes, has to do with three basic things: (a) a fighting spirit, (b) what makes a man indignant at injustice and a coward when he feels himself in the wrong, and (c) ambition and competitiveness.[440] The balance of the soul is achieved by having the right amount and the right kind of poetry. Too little poetry makes the guardian hard and coarse, but too much poetry makes his soul "softer than it ought to be."[441] "[S]weet, soft" poetry will "melt and liquefy his spirit."[442]

Still softness is not only associated with the soul or a tone of language; perhaps most curiously is that it is linked with the people or the many, that is, with democracy. The word appears in Book VIII to describe the conditions for a democratic revolution, namely when the rulers become "too soft (*malakos*) to resist pleasures and pains."[443] It is then used to describe the "gentleness" and "tolerance" with which the condemned to death or exile are treated in democracy.[444] Democracy is called a "sweet regime, without rulers,"[445] and the democratic person is one who "tastes the drones' honey."[446]

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[439] Pl. *Resp*. 395d.
[440] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol.4, 476.
[441] Pl. *Resp*. 410d.
[442] Pl. *Resp*. 411a-b.
[443] Pl. *Resp*. 556 b-c; 558a-b.
[444] Pl. *Resp*. 562d.
[445] Pl. *Resp*. 558c.
[446] Pl. *Resp*. 559d. Gentleness is used conversely to democracy/anarchy, however, at 562d, where unless the rulers are very gentle and allow much freedom, they begin accusing others of being polluted and oligarchs.

This softness or gentleness also has earlier references in the passages on poetic *mimēsis* earlier in the dialogue, namely to describe a certain poetry suitable for the many. Certain poetry may be "poetic and sweet for the many to hear," says Plato, but this kind of poetry should not be heard by the future rulers of the city.[447] Even the excessive love of poetry itself, which makes the people gentle, "belongs to the many."[448]

Athenian democracy is defined throughout Greek literature as the mild or gentle or tolerant rule of the many.[449] Tenderness is both musical and political at once. In *de Audibilibus*, for instance, Aristotle describes a musician that neither uses too much breath so as to play harshly, nor uses too little breath so as to remain silent. Rather the desired mediation is to play *malakos* (tenderly), which, Aristotle says in the *Politica*, is also the characteristic of a democratic (meaning not oligarchic) form of government.[450]

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Is there still yet another, final prohibition that comes alongside the exclusion of a poetics that is too "soft"? Is the attempt to create strong and courageous "boys and men" not more broadly also as an attempt to construct gender? It is not the case that women cannot be considered as rulers[451], or receive equal poetic education[452], although it must be said that the *crisis* of women rulers is later described as a characteristic of democracy in the city.[453] There is not necessarily an exclusion of

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[447] Pl. *Resp*. 387b.

[448] Pl. *Resp*. 608a.

[449] For the references to the rule of the many, see Arist. *Pol.* 2030; For the mildness or gentleness of Athenian democracy cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 22. 19.

[450] See Arist. *De audib.* 803a20, 803a8; and Arist. *Pol.* 1290a28.

[451] Pl. *Resp*. 465a-b.

[452] Pl. *Resp*. 452a.

[453] Pl. *Resp*. 563b: "And the ultimate in the freedom of the multitude, my friend," I said, "occurs in such a city when the purchased slaves, male and female, are no less free than those

women in the *Republic*, but there is a definite prohibition against someone *acting* like a woman.

There is a certain kind of masculinity being constructed in the poetics of sovereignty. It is not allowed for "good men to imitate women since they are men," says Plato.[454] As Adriana Cavarero reminds us, the reason why there is "no place for the Muse's song" in the *Republic* is because the Muse's principle function is "emblematically feminine" or even complicit with the "female body."[455] And yet, at the same time, there is a feminine character to the voice that Plato ascribes to democracy.

Is this why, in Antigone, Tiresias claims that the problem with Creon, who vows to "never be rated / inferior to a woman,"[456] is that he lacks what Tiresias calls a "gentler tongue"?[457] In each case, it is not only the construction of masculinity in the city, but also the construction of a feminine subject from the perspective of a male author. Whatever the case may be, in Plato's city, what is most crucial is not the exclusion of women, but that boys and men must not *act* like women. For this reason both the theater and the femininity of democracy are excluded by banning the tenderness in the bare voice.

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who have bought them. And we almost forgot to mention the extent of the law of equality and of freedom in the relations of women with men and men with women."

[454] Pl. *Resp*. 395d.

[455] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Trans. Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 98, 102.

[456] Soph. *Ant.* 760.

[457] Soph. *Ant.* 1212.

III. The Grain of the Voice

"ses purs ongles"—Stéphane Mallarmé, from *Sonnet en "-yx"*[458]

The third form of voice that gets excluded in Plato's poetics in the *Republic* is what Roland Barthes calls "the grain of the voice."[459] The "grain" or texture of the voice, says Barthes, is the way in which the voice lies in the body or in which the body lies in the voice.[460] Unlike speech, the material grain of the voice can never be the expression of *logos* or metaphysics; it is simply "the materiality of the body" "in its very materiality."[461]

In contrast to Barthes' grain of the voice, the voice (*phōnē*) for Plato must always be reduced to something more primary, such as a proper understanding for named things or an inner voice or *daimōn*. In the poetics of Plato's *Republic*, the oral poetry that will be repeated by the political class must always be reducible to the *logos*, a kind of exceptional speech or expression that for Plato has a prior origin in the *archē* of the city. The poetry given to the guardians must never be chosen according to its phonic and structural aspects or melody, harmony, and rhythm. Rather, the worth of song is always judged on whether or not it conforms to the *logos*.[462]

As Socrates says, "…melody is composed of three things speech, harmonic mode, and rhythm."[463] "And," he continues, "the harmonic mode and the rhythm must follow the speech."[464] He then repeats the formulation twice more in the

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[458] In French, Mallarmé's famous written phrase *ses purs ongles*, meaning "her pure nails," is transformed when spoken aloud or heard into the words *c'est pur son*, meaning "it's pure sound." Mallarmé uses this technique often in his poetry and often privileges the voice over the meaning of the written text.

[459] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 179-89.

[460] Ibid., 188.

[461] Ibid., 182. Cf. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, 15.

[462] Pl. *Resp.* 398d; 400d.

[463] Pl. *Resp*.

[464] Pl. *Resp*.

following discussion as if to underscore the importance of this order between sound or *phōnē* and *logos*: "[W]e'll compel the foot and the tune to follow the speech of such a man, rather than the speech following the foot and the tune."[465] The point is serious enough to say it a third time and even more definitively: "[R]hythm and harmonic mode follow speech…and not speech them."[466]

What is it about the bare grain of sound or *phōnē* that is so dangerous to Plato's city? What is it specifically about sound or orality that, unless it is reduced to *logos* or conforms to it, poses a threat to the harmony of the city?

Two scholars of Plato, Eric Havelock and Adriana Cavarero, write about these problems in similar ways. For Havelock, the poetics of the *Republic* is ultimately concerned with poetry's seductive orality — not "[w]hat the poet was saying…but how he was saying it and manipulating it."[467] Poetry, in other words, always involves "the psychological effects of reciting it and listening to it"[468] — a music that could lead Plato's guardians astray. Plato thus draws a line between truth and reason, on the one hand, and the dangerous illusions of poetry, on the other, namely those "sounds organized in concordant rhythms: the metrical speech and the instrumental melody."[469] Plato then imposes "an insistent demand that we think of isolated mental entities or abstractions and that we use abstract language in describing or explaining experience."[470]

Adriana Cavarero speaks of the poetics of the *Republic* as establishing what she calls "the devocalization of logos."[471] "The devocalization of logos inaugurated by Plato," writes Cavarero, "above all tends to liberate speech from the corporeality of

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[465] Pl. *Resp*. 400a.

[466] Pl. *Resp*. 400d.

[467] Havelock, Eric A. *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1963), 146.

[468] Ibid., 150.

[469] Ibid., 28, 150.

[470] Ibid., 257.

[471] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, 62.

breath and the voice."[472] Just as we might recall that Dante begins his poem by calling out for the Muses' song, or that Hölderlin begins his poem "Greece" by praising the "voices of destiny," Cavarero says that so too poetry for Plato is "the form of orality par excellence."[473] Thus Plato links his critique of poetry to a critique of vocality to "the power of the voice, the charm of songs and sounds, the bodily enjoyment of the ear."[474] But Cavarero also reminds us that these pleasures ultimately confuse the proper distinction between the rulers and the ruled: poetry "nurtures and waters the passions and establishes them as rulers in us when they ought to wither and be ruled."[475]

Cavarero's reflections on poetry and politics note that the sound of poetry, and particularly, the voice, has the potential to call into question the division between the ruler and the ruled. In fact, this is the precisely Plato's description of the birth of democracy in Athens in the *Laws*. The democracy that was practiced in the theater of Athens first came about through the grain of the voice. Notes no longer conformed to the laws of music and voices no longer conformed to the *logos*.

In contrast to the grain of the voice, we find in Plato's political philosophy what Hannah Arendt calls a prescription for "the absolute quiet of contemplation" and a retreat from the bodily voice.[476] The good guardian will be distinguished by his "quiet character."[477] The guardian is told to "keep quiet," to be "in silence, afraid of their leaders."[478] Just like the demos in the theater of Athens. For it is finest, says Socrates, "to keep as quiet as possible in misfortunes and not be irritated…"[479]; the vocal,

[472] Ibid., 62.
[473] Ibid., 82.
[474] Ibid., 81.
[475] Ibid., 84.
[476] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 14-15.
[477] Pl. *Resp*. 604e.
[478] Pl. *Resp*. 389e.
[479] Pl. *Resp*. 604b.

irritable person is "varied" like "a festive assembly where all sorts of human beings are gathered in a theater."[480]

IV. The Polyphony of Voice

The final notion of the voice that is excluded is the musical phenomenon of polyphony, that is, multichorded or multivoiced music that does not conform to the *logos* but assumes a separate phonic existence.

In contrast to the mixture of various styles and modes in *polyphōnia*, the modes of poetic music in the *Republic* must be simple, "unmixed," or "mostly in the same style and in one mode."[481] These unmixed modes are contrasted with a poetics of polyphony in at least three ways: first, to poetic music itself, that is, to "many-toned" or "many-stringed" music which plays in "many modes"[482]; second, to the "manifold person" who "doesn't harmonize with [the] regime"[483]; and, finally, to a diverse gathering or polyphonic assembly of "many free men."[484]

The first element of polyphony that is excluded in Plato's poetics is a polyphony within music itself. "[T]here'll be no need of many-toned or panharmonic instruments for our songs and melodies," Plato writes.[485] There will be no "many-stringed" instruments in the city that "play many modes," especially the flute, which Plato calls "the most many-stringed of all."[486] This variety and multiplicity of notes on the flute and on the lyre is related to democracy even in the *Republic*. The "many-toned" music gives birth to the kind of licentiousness and freedom and law courts that

[480] Pl. *Resp*. 604e.
[481] Pl. *Resp*. 397b-e.
[482] Pl. *Resp*. 399d.
[483] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.
[484] Pl. *Resp*. 405a, 604 e.
[485] Pl. *Resp*. 399c.
[486] Pl. *Resp*. 399d.

characterizes democracy for Plato.[487] The multivoiced flute returns in Book VIII in the section on democracy when the democratic person is described as "all-various" and "many-colored," living "day by day…drinking and listening to the flute…."[488]

Plato's remedy for this problem is always proper instruction or correct education. In the *Republic*, the problem is easily solved. Polyphonic music is excluded quickly because it does not conform to the *logos*. In the *Laws*, a certain "official in charge of education" is tasked with forbidding *polyphōnia* — that is, with forbidding any sound that does not conform to the song being sung. As Plato writes:

> …each string…must produce notes that are identical in pitch to the words being sung. The lyre should not be used to play an elaborate independent melody: that is, its strings must produce no notes except those of the composer of the melody being played; small intervals should not be combined with large, nor quick tempo with slow, nor low notes with high. Similarly, the rhythms of the music of the lyre must not be tricked out with all sorts of frills and adornments. All this sort of thing must be kept from students…. [A]ll these musical matters should be controlled, according to his brief, by our official in charge of education….[489]

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In addition to multivoiced music itself, polyphony also characterizes a specific kind of person. The second element of polyphony that is excluded is the polyphonic person, that is, the person of split consciousness, or of diverse or manifold personae. As we have seen, the order and harmony of the city is based on a division of labor in which "each man does one thing" so as to harmonize with the regime.[490] In other words, the shoemaker is only a shoemaker; he is not also a pilot, or, one must add, a ruler-philosopher.[491] Thus the shoemaker will make shoes and do nothing else or think anything otherwise.[492] The poetics of the single-minded shoemaker is defined in

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[487] Pl. *Resp*. 404e-405b.
[488] Pl. *Resp*. 561c, e.
[489] Pl. *Leg.* 812d-e.
[490] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.
[491] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.
[492] Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, trans. John Drury, Corinne, Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 29. "The

sharp contrast to the "manifold" person who does more than one thing. Not only can one become more than a shoemaker; one can also think as a philosopher, write as a poet indeed, one can act in the voice of any possible persona, including animals and nature.[493]

The poetics of multiple personae, says Plato, disrupts the harmony of the regime.[494] This experience of the polyphonic person is likened to democracy in Book VIII. Not only is the democratic city "many-colored"[495] and "decorated in all hues"[496], so too the democratic person is "all-various…and many-colored, like the city."[497] This person even has intercourse with beasts who "purvey manifold and subtle pleasures with every sort of variety."[498]

For Plato, the person who speaks in multiple literary voices is like a manifold person who does many things.[499] But in particular, it imitates the kind of persons who are not even on the citizen roll. The specific *mimēsis* that is excluded from Plato's *Republic* is the imitation of "women," "workers," "slaves" even to "animals" and "nature."[500] A parallel passage in the arc of the *Republic* in Book VIII then links democracy and anarchy to the equality of women, workers, slaves, foreigners, animals, and youth.[501] One wonders what it would mean to speak of a poetics of democracy that includes even animals and nature.

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only danger," writes Rancière, "lies in confusing orders. Between artisan and warrior, there can be no exchange of place and function; neither can two things be done at the same time without bringing doom to the city."

[493] Pl. *Resp*. 397a.
[494] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.
[495] Pl. *Resp*. 558c.
[496] Pl. *Resp*. 557c.
[497] Pl. *Resp*. 561e.
[498] Pl. *Resp*. 559d.
[499] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.
[500] Pl. *Resp*. 395d-e, 396b.
[501] Pl. *Resp*. 562e-563c.

The third element of polyphony that is excluded in Plato's poetics is a poetics of and for the spectators – or more broadly, a poetics of and for the people, who become participants and judges in the theater through a kind of theatrocracy. As commentators have noted, one of the primary dangers of the polyphonic or multi-formed style of poetic music is that a public audience sympathizes with it.[502] Not only does the love of poetry belong to the many – as opposed to philosophy, which belongs to the few or even to one.[503] In Book X we also see that the kind of poet who has a "various disposition" and "good reputation among the many" produces a poetry that is enjoyed by "a festive assembly where all sorts of human beings are gathered in a theater."[504]

We find similar passages in other dialogues such as in Plato's *Gorgias*, in which Plato claims that poetry is simply an attempt to please the mob – that is, men, women, children, slaves and free men, all together.[505] We also find it in later descriptions of Plato and Socrates such as in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, in which Socrates says, "…you are ashamed to speak before a gathering of the most stupid and weak people. For how can you be ashamed to speak before fullers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, farmers, merchants, or traders in the market, who think only of buying and selling dear?"[506]

The Greek commentator on music, the Plutarch, notes in particular that the changes in music actually took place in Athens' "theaters and public spectacles" and "it is this which Plato, in the third book of his Commonwealth, condemns."[507] As he writes, "The Moderns…have, in the room of what is manly, solemn, and divine, introduced into their theaters and public spectacles a feeble and frittered stile."[508]

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[502] Pl. *Resp*. 397d. Havelock, *A Preface to Plato*, 26; Haskins, 9-10, 12-13.

[503] Pl. *Resp*. 608a.

[504] Pl. *Resp*. 604e-605a.

[505] Pl. *Gorg*. 502b-d; Gerald Else, *Plato and Aristotle on Poetry*, ed. Peter Burian (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 10.

[506] Xen. Mem. 3.7.6, cited by Mackie, ed., *Oral Performance and Its Context*, 130.

[507] [Plut.] *De mus.* 1136b; Ps. Plutarch, *The ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ*, 39. On manliness and musical education see Pl. *Resp*. 2-3; Arist. *Pol*. 8.

[508] Ibid.

What is this poetics of assembly which Plato condemns? What is the revolution in the poetry of Athens? Plato's description not only recalls the various definitions of democracy we are given in Book VIII. It also resounds with a certain poetics of the voice. The kind of poetry performed in such a diverse assembly, says Plato, breaks with being quiet.[509] This same definition of poetry, of course, is found in Plato's *Laws* when he speaks of democracy born in the theater, and of those spectators who once were controlled and silent but now mix modes and speak out as equals and participants in the theater. There is something in this phenomenon of mixed and polyphonic poetry, in other words, which erases the distinction between the spectator and the actor, between those who judge and control the theater and "the general public" who used to "refrain from passing judgment by shouting" or else be "disciplined and controlled by a stick."[510] The mixed compositions not only give "the ordinary man…a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge."[511] And soon "the audiences, once silent, began to use their voices."[512]

The phenomenon is almost exactly what Nietzsche describes when he speaks of the tragic Greek chorus in *The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music*. Not only is the democratic poetics in the *Laws* Dionysian, that is, "gripped by a frenzied and excessive lust for pleasure" which mixes paeans with dithyrambs. It was also a phenomenon in which the spectator was emancipated and became a full participant in the action the collective theater.[513] Nietzsche describes this experience as the relationship between the audience and the Greek chorus, which he notes pre-figures speaking roles or individual actors and was the origin of tragedy and comedy itself. As Nietzsche writes, "[W]e must always remind ourselves that the public in Attic tragedy re–discovered itself in chorus of the orchestra and that basically there was no opposition between

[509] Pl. *Resp*. 604e.
[510] Pl. *Leg.* 700c-d.
[511] Pl. *Leg.* 701a.
[512] Ibid.
[513] Pl. *Leg.* 700d.

the public and the chorus."[514] He continues, "A public of spectators, as we know it, was unknown to the Greeks. In their theatre, given the way the spectators' space was built up in terraces, raised up in concentric rings, it was possible for everyone quite literally to look out over the collective cultural world around him and with a complete perspective to imagine himself a member of the chorus."[515]

In the experience of the chorus, in the concentric circles of the public architecture of the theater itself, there is what Jean-Luc Nancy, recalling Plato's *Ion*, calls the experience of being enchained.[516] It is how theater assembles us, gathering manifold personae who consider themselves equal participants in a political and aesthetic event. And, at least according to Plato, it has everything to do with the birth of democracy as a community festival. Of course, it must be said, this experience resembles nothing like modern liberalism.

But what does all of this have to do with the chorus? Pindar describes a poetics of many voices that "entices the people to gather at contests…[in] the city of lovely choruses."[517] The hymn in which this reference occurs was written in the early years of Athenian democracy and speaks of Athena, patron of democratic Athens. Likewise, when the democratic army faced the oligarchic army in 404BCE in the port of Piraeus, Xenophanes says that a herald reminded them of belonging to one city through participating in choruses together.[518] What is it about the chorus that is so closely connected to the fabric of democratic Athens?

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[514] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

[515] Ibid.

[516] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Sharing Voices," in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990): 211-259.

[517] Pind. *Pyth*. 12.

[518] Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.20; cf. Murray, 16-7.

V. The Order of Discourse, or *Mimēsis*

As we have seen, the *Republic* uses speech to make the basic division and selection between those who are fit to rule and those who are fit to be ruled.[519] Thus the initial foundation for the rulers' elevation over the ruled is a distinct kind of poetic, musical, and theatrical education,[520] which is ultimately based on "speech" or *logos*.[521] As Eric Havelock puts it, this mimetic education or *mimēsis*, rather than referring to dramatic action or poetic performance, "now becomes a term applied to the situation of a student apprentice, who absorbs lessons, and repeats and hence 'imitates' what he is told to master."[522] Plato himself describes his method of poetic education as the model for a stamp[523], as the minting of coins[524], or as a form of speech that is unary or universal.[525]

Elsewhere Lacoue-Labarthe calls this education a "positing of the same," a repetition of reason or the Idea.[526] Just as each person does one thing, the poetry given to the future rulers and soldiers must be composed "mostly in the same style and in one mode" and "in a similar rhythm"[527] and it must "harmonize with the regime."[528] This is how Lacan sees it as well, who suggests that in Plato's dialogues the personae in the discussion are there simply to repeat a discourse that has already been set out for it. In the *Meno*, Lacan writes, "they ask him [the slave] questions, master's questions, of course, and the slave naturally answers what the questions already

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[519] Pl. *Resp*. 412b; 413e-414a.

[520] Pl. *Resp*. 412b; 413e-414a.

[521] Pl. *Resp*. 398d;400d.

[522] Havelock, Eric A. *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 23.

[523] Pl. *Resp*. 377b.

[524] Pl. *Resp*. 395b.

[525] Pl. *Resp*. 397b, 596b.

[526] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 70.

[527] Pl. *Resp*. 397b.

[528] Pl. *Resp*. 397e.

dictate as their response."[529] Rancière puts it still differently: "[H]ierarchy first appears as knowledge and regulation of the simulacrum," writes Rancière.[530] "And so the divisions of the social order and the division of the order of discourse are brought into harmony."[531]As Pablo Neruda might say, in the poetics of Plato's *Republic* "[t]here's something dense, united, sitting in the background / repeating its number, its identical signal."[532]

Our point is that a discourse which trains the guardians in the *logos* is installed at the expense of the polyphony of voice — namely those multiple personae, shouts in the theater, laughter and mourning, and the polyphonic assembly that has the potential to rupture the order of the city. The guardians repeat the discourse as their bodies conform to it.

Democracy, by contrast, occurs for Plato as a *disquiet* in the life of the body itself. Similar to poets like Pasolini or Ginsberg, here sexuality and politics occur at once. Democracy arrives in the *Republic* when the people no longer conform to the *logos* through their silence. "True speech" (*logos*) is no longer admitted, no longer honored or even "let into the guardhouse."[533] The people, rather than "admit the auxiliary force…[or] the speeches of older private men," break their silence and begin to speak.[534] Spectators are emancipated, the division between the ruler and the ruled is shattered, and the *archē* of the city is cancelled out in the most subtle and yet forceful grain of the voice.

What is it about the bare voice specifically — the voice as distinct from "speech" or *logos* — that begets democracy? Contrary to what Derrida had thought, there is

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[529] Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 1969-70*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2007), 22.

[530] Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, trans. John Drury, Corinne, Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 17.

[531] Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, 39.

[532] From "Oneness," in *Residencia en la tierra, I* (1933), trans. Stephen Kessler, The Essential Neruda: Selected Poems, Ed. Mark Eisner (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), 17.

[533] Pl. *Resp*. 560d; 561b.

[534] Pl. *Resp*. 560c.

another notion of the voice that has always been distinct from the metaphysical speech or *logos* of the ruled.

Part III: The Birth of Representation

I. The Birth of the Legislator

As we have seen in the passages on poetic *mimēsis* in the *Republic*, Plato institutes a discourse and simultaneously banishes a poetics of polyphony from the city. This logic of sovereignty amounts to the exclusion of bare voices in the middle of the 4th Century political thought. But after Plato's *Republic*, the potential ruler with *logos* is transformed from a noble monarch or king into a legislator or representative precisely the kind of representative or legislation that would give birth to and maintain modern democratic social contracts.

Plato's turn to legislation and law in the 4th Century is contemporaneous with Plato's deep and personal involvement in the politics of Sicily.[535] There a general Dionysius had become a "tyrant" over once-democratic Syracuse. In 367/6, the general was succeeded by his son Dionysius II, to whom four of Plato's thirteen recorded letters are addressed.[536] Dion, Dionysius' brother-in-law and friend of Plato, felt that the younger ruler had both great philosophical tendencies and the features of a future tyrant. Thus Dion wrote to Plato requesting that Plato come to Syracuse to educate young Dionysius. According to the *Letters*, Plato arrived immediately in Syracuse in 367/6.

Sicily gives Plato an opportunity to enact the kind of city in the *Republic*. Plato speaks earnestly in the letters of his hope that young Dionysius would "perfect himself in wisdom and self-control."[537] The *Seventh Letter* in particular shows Plato and Dion's hope of educating Dionysius in the ways of philosophy similar to the way Glaucon

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[535] See Guthrie's account of the authenticity of Plato's letters in Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 5, 399-417.

[536] Plato's remaining letters are addressed mostly to the friends of Dion in Syracuse, but also to the tyrant Hermias, the Italian statesman Archytas, and Perdiccas III who would become King of Macedon.

[537] Pl. *L.* VII 332e.

had been educated in the *Republic*. Plato writes that, despite the difficult circumstances he was made to endure in Sicily, he "put up with all of this…holding fast to the original purpose for which I had come, hoping that he [Dionysius] might somehow come to desire the philosophic life."[538] In the end, however, Plato failed. Plato was placed in captivity for some time on a false charge of conspiring to overthrow the government. Dion, Plato's friend, was murdered. And young Dionysius became a great tyrant; he exiled those whom he feared did not support him and unified all of Sicily under his regime.[539]

After this experience, the turn towards legislation in Plato's later political thought is indicated in Plato's *Eighth Letter*. Here Plato no longer speaks of his hope of educating young Dionysius in Syracuse — in fact, it appears from the letter that Plato has lost his hope in Dionysius to become a just and noble King in Sicily. The majority of the letter consists of Plato addressing the people of Syracuse directly. The address begins: "First of all, men of Syracuse, accept laws…."[540] Plato says on two occasions that the purpose of these laws is to limit the powers of the tyrant or King.[541] In fact, Plato recommends the appointment of three Kings in Syracuse rather than one; moreover, he suggests that these Kings would hold largely ceremonial positions and would have no real power in government. He suggests that the real power of the state be held with multiple assemblies, including: an assembly of ambassadors, many from foreign countries, to draw up a constitution; a council of thirty-five guardians to govern the state; and several courts of justice for various offenses, with new judges chosen each year.[542]

The legislator then enters the story of philosophy in Plato's later political works and in Aristotle's ethical and political thought. As we know, this same figure becomes

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[538] Pl. *L.* VII 330b.

[539] See account in *Letter VII*.

[540] Pl. *L.* VIII 355a.

[541] Pl. *L.* VIII 354c, 356d.

[542] Pl. *L.* VIII 356d. See fuller account in R. F. Stalley, *An Introduction to Plato's Laws* (Indianapolis: Hackett Printing, 1983), 20.

paramount for eighteenth-century thinking on "democracy," as we find, for instance, in the work of Rousseau. But throughout this transformation from a monarch to a mixed government with a legislator, one thing does not change: the one who exhibits exceptional speech is given extraordinary power.

The birth of the legislator is an extension of the word *logos* from ruler to legislator in Plato's later political thought. In the *Republic*, the ruler is described as *logistikon*, from *logismos*, that is, having a certain kind of "calculation" or "reckoning."[543] By Plato's *Statesman*, this art of calculation allows a statesman to "assign whatever is the appropriate task," but also to oversee that task until it is completed, that is, to see "something's coming into being."[544] By the time of Plato's *Laws*, this art of calculation, *logismos*, is the firm foundation for law. As Plato writes:

> Over and against all of these we have "calculation," by which we judge the relative merits of pleasure and pain, and when this is expressed as a public decision of a state, it receives the title "law."[545]
>
> This cord [that links us to the gods], which is golden and holy, transmits the power of "calculation", a power which in a state is called the public law.[546]

How does the ruler with *logos* transform into the figure of the legislator? Just as in Plato's *Eighth Letter*, in Plato's *Statesman* and the *Laws*, Plato regrets that the ideal ruler who had been educated in the *logos* in the *Republic* is "nowhere to be found."[547] The philosopher-king would have ruled the city without laws through his unique knowledge of political things. And this way of ruling would have been preferable because he could negotiate his theoretical understanding directly with each practical

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[543] On this point, see John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 369.

[544] Pl. *Plt*. 260a-301b.

[545] Pl. *Leg*. 644d.

[546] Pl. *Leg*. 645a.

[547] Pl. *Plt*. 301d-e. Translations are those of C.J. Rowe in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

situation at hand. In the *Statesman* and in the *Laws*, Plato turns to the "second-best method of proceeding."[548] This method, Plato now says, is to "establish laws and written rules…[and] to allow neither individual nor mass ever to do anything contrary to these anything whatsoever."[549] These laws by their nature of having been written down from words once spoken by "those who know" are at best "imitations of the truth."[550]

For Plato, "…when…a king does not come to be in cities…it is necessary so it seems for people to come together and write things down, pursuing the tracks of the truest constitution."[551] The legislator will draw up laws that will at best copy the truth directly[552]; he will then give those laws to the ruler at hand so that they may be implemented. As Plato says, he will act like a doctor who goes abroad and leaves instructions for his patients.[553] The legislator, then, is someone who will come before the city and establish its laws for it in advance out of a special, elevated wisdom. His written laws are only copies of the truth, but in founding these laws, he stands outside of the law in order to found it. Afterwards, he leaves the law or goes "abroad." In other words, he is no longer bound to it. He is the figure of the sovereign legislator: By virtue of his knowledge of the *logos*, he is given extraordinary power of coming before the law.

By the time of Aristotle's *Politics*, it is the task of the legislator to precede the city and bring it into being. Aristotle indicates the special distinction of the legislator in its opening pages, writing: a "social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors."[554] Thus, although

[548] Pl. *Plt*. 300c.
[549] Ibid.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Pl. *Plt*. 301e.
[552] Pl. *Plt*. 300c.
[553] Pl. *Plt*. 295c.
[554] Arist. *Pol.* 1253a30-2.

human beings have the natural inclination to be with others in a city, the city first requires someone to bring it into being in order for it to be at all. Aristotle calls this figure a statesman or a legislator and likens him to a craftsman, such as a weaver or a shipbuilder.[555]

In Book VII of the *Politics*, Aristotle lists four materials that the legislator uses in order to bring a city into being.[556] These materials are: the population or number of citizens; the character of the citizens; the size of the territory; and the character of the land.[557] But as it is well known, Aristotle spends much of his philosophy, like, Plato, concerned about the second of these materials: The ethics or character of the citizens in a city. As Aristotle writes at the beginning of Book VII in the *Politics*, and repeats at the opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "…the happiness of the individual is the same as that of the state…."[558] He adds, "A city can be excellent only when the citizens who have a share in the government are excellent, and in our state all the citizens share in the government."[559]

The culture of the self and the ascendancy of the individual is depicted in the opening pages of the *Laws*, prefiguring Aristotle's *Ethics*. The key task of the legislator is to cultivate an ethics in the city:

> What is the point I am trying make clear in saying all this? Simply that in laying down his laws every legislator who is any use at all…will never have anything in view except the highest virtue.[560]

Likewise, Aristotle opens and closes the work of the *Nicomachean Ethics* with comments on the role of the legislator in shaping a culture of personal ethics or virtue

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[555] Arist. *Pol.* 1325b38-39.
[556] Arist. *Pol.* 1326a1-3.
[557] Arist. *Pol.* 1326a1-3.
[558] Arist. *Pol.* 1324b1; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1094b7-9, 1095a14-20.
[559] Arist. *Pol.* 1332a35.
[560] Pl. *Leg.* 630b-c. Translations are those of Trevor J. Saunders in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

in the city. This figure of the legislator is introduced in Book I when Aristotle claims that the legislator has "put more effort into virtue than anyone else" through his method of "political science," and that it is for this reason that "political science" was chosen as the method of inquiry for the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[561] The almost-silent figure of the legislator precedes the *Nicomachean Ethics* as the figure who has both theoretical and practical knowhow of virtue and therefore has the authority to define its method of inquiry accordingly.[562] The figure of the legislator then returns at the close of the work. Aristotle concludes in Book X by saying that only laws — the work of the legislator — have the "power to prevail and compel" us in virtue.[563] Therefore it is the legislators who "must[...]urge people toward virtue and exhort them to aim at the fine."[564] Laws must be given to the community by the legislator, namely laws for the right habituation, practices, "upbringing," or "education" of the youth.[565]

The similarities between the legislator in Plato's late political philosophy and Aristotle's political and ethical thought are remarkable. Plato even offers the very image that Aristotle gives us at the opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the *Laws*. He writes: "…a law is well enacted only if it constantly aims, like an archer, at that unique target which is the only object of legislation…."[566] This aim, as he makes clear in the passage, is ethical virtue.[567] In sum, we must "[start] with virtue, and [explain] that this is the aim of the laws the legislator laid down."

The legislator is considered to be the person best suited to educate the young in the ways of virtue. And citing Plato, Aristotle speaks repeatedly in Book II on the

[561] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1102a14.
[562] Ibid., cf. Book VI.
[563] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1180a18.
[564] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1180a7-8.
[565] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1180a30-1180b8.
[566] Pl. *Leg.* 705e.
[567] Ibid.

grave importance of educating the youth in virtues "right from early youth."[568] As Aristide Tessitore puts it, "Parents, legislators, and Aristotle's study of ethics share the common aim of encouraging habits conducing to goodness."[569] And yet, as Aristotle notes in Book X, a father's instructions alone are unable to "prevail and compel" youth — nor can the instructions of any individual compel them. Only law, that which is devised by the legislators, "has the power that compels."[570] Therefore, "It is best…if the community attends to upbringing" "through laws."[571] And it will do so, as Aristotle notes in Book II, by first assigning this task to this new figure of the legislator — for "the legislator makes the citizens good by habituating them, and this is the wish of every legislator; if he fails to do it well he misses his goal."[572]

II. Modern Democracy: Officers of the Sovereign

In 1761, in the same year that Rousseau makes a distinction between noise and the voice in the *Essay*, Rousseau writes of a modern, sovereign legislator who is defined by exceptional speech: a legislator who will "enunciate" or "pronounce" what is sovereign for the People. Despite initially describing sovereignty as the general will of the people in the *Social Contract* — composed of "as many members as there are voices in the assembly"[573] — Rousseau later describes this need for a "guide" for the "blind multitude," an "organ to enunciate its will," an "extraordinary man" to

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[568] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1104b13.

[569] Pl. *Leg.* 631a; Arist. *Pol.* 7.7, 8.1; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1103b23-31; 10.9. Aristide Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 25. Translations of Aristotle's *Politics* are those of B. Jowett in: Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[570] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1180a18.

[571] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1180a30-1180b1.

[572] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1103b4-5.

[573] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 4, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 139.

"pronounce" its will for it.[574] This sovereign political figure emerges in the *Social Contract* much like Plato and Aristotle's legislator as a figure who stands prior to the State and above the law.[575]

If we read the *Essay* closely alongside the *Social Contract*, the figure of the legislator is, in fact, a poet who sings out the laws at the *archē* or very beginning of the state.[576] As Rousseau writes, "…the first laws were in verse" and "sung."[577] Rousseau then reminds us in a footnote that in Greek the word *nomos* may mean both song and law.[578] Rousseau, like Plato, likely has Solon, the ancient poet-legislator in mind, whose songs or laws serve as the basis for Plato's book by the same name, the *Laws* (*Nomoi*). Indeed, much like the *Laws*, the original, sung laws in the *Essay* represent the pure origin of language itself before language and music degenerated.

Rousseau's distinction between *song* and the voice without discourse, or *noise*, makes way for a political distinction between the multitude, which turns out to be "blind," and legislators or "officers of the sovereign." The necessity of the sovereign and subsequent "officers of the sovereign" emerges as a result of the people's inability to govern themselves. As Rousseau writes,

> The people that is subject to the laws ought to be their author. But how will they regulate these conditions?[...]Does the body politic have an organ to enunciate its will? Who will give it the necessary foresight to formulate acts and publish them in advance, or how will it pronounce them in time of need? How will a blind multitude, which often does not know what it wants because it rarely knows what is good for it, execute by itself an undertaking as vast and as difficult as a system of legislation? By itself, the people always wants the good, but by itself it does not always see it. The general will is always right, but the judgment that guides it is not always

[574] Ibid., 154.

[575] Rousseau's major political work, the *Social Contract*, and his major work on language, the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, are sent off for review in the same year, 1761. See Rousseau, *Essay*, xi; Rousseau, *Social Contract*, x.

[576] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7, ed., trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England, 1998), 318.

[577] Ibid.

[578] Ibid., 577.

> enlightened…. The [public] must be taught to know what it wants…. From this arises the necessity for a legislator.[579]

The legislator is "an extraordinary man in the State," a person of "genius" or "superior intelligence."[580] Still in order to "preside over the founding of the institution," one must have recourse to divine authority, theology, or religion.[581] The problem, however, is that communicating the divine requires a rare mode of expression and "it is not every man who can make the Gods speak or be believed when he declares himself their interpreter."[582] It is for this reason that the true legislator, as the *Essay* says, must also be a poet: for "poetry is the source of eloquence" and makes possible the initial singing of the law. The figure of the legislator is thus the figure of the originary, holy voice whose eloquence distinguishes him- or herself from the multitude and is able to found the law through song.[583] Despite democracy's promise of equality, the new Sovereign is once again that figure who is distinguished by his voice.

Rousseau's modern poet-legislator's voice must speak out the divine as if he were God's representative on earth; but he must do so in a way that appears to be the true voice of the people. His speech is defined, in fact, as the *voice of the people* itself. As Rousseau writes, the voice of the legislator must not be above the people but rather subject "to the free vote of the people."[584] Likewise, his laws must not be obscure for "common people," but "understood by the people"; he must learn to speak in "the language of the people."[585] The modern legislator "is not magistracy, it is not sovereignty" itself.[586] It is the *voice of the people*. But just like Euripides, who Nietzsche

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[579] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 154.

[580] Ibid., 154-5.

[581] Ibid., 156-7. It is for this reason, Rousseau writes, that politics and religion serves as instruments for one another.

[582] Ibid., 157. Cf. p. 154, to "enunciate" or "pronounce" the people's will.

[583] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 318.

[584] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 156.

[585] Ibid.

[586] Ibid., 155.

claims speaks in the voice of the people only to rise above them, the common language of Rousseau's legislator has one aim: to ascend over and above them.

Despite the fact that the legislator is one man and his action is far from democratic in practice, this action is described as democratic in name because it names or sings out democratic law with a voice that is holy in contrast to other lesser voices. The actual voices of the people who do not speak in this way are only amassed and assembled through the poet-legislator.[587]

III. The Birth of Representation

The founding gesture of modern democracy for Rousseau is defined by a single sovereign voice: it is when a leader or individual acts in a sovereign way on behalf of the people and legislates the law through a language that is so pure that it is song. Still, after the State and its laws have been decreed and the legislator has instituted the Republic, a second group of people comes to speak on behalf of the people: that is, a government, representation, or those who Rousseau calls "officers of the sovereign." The legislator is not the elected leader or governor of the State, but rather the one who "create[s] the institutions" of the State which then make it possible for the birth of "the leaders of Republics."[588] As Rousseau writes, this "Government or supreme administration [is] the legitimate exercise of the executive power"; "Prince or magistrate" is the name of "the man or body charged with that administration."[589] Representation or government, then, is "an intermediate body established between the subjects and the Sovereign for their mutual communication, and charged with the

[587] Cf. Alain Badiou's praise for Rousseau's legislator as one who steps into the void in order to the preserve it in Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2005), 344-54.

[588] Ibid.

[589] Ibid., 167.

execution of the laws and the maintenance of…freedom."[590] The "officers of the sovereign"[591] are the legitimate voice of the people.[592]

Finally, after the State has been founded through *nomos*, or lawful song, and after representatives have been put into place as the legitimate voice of the people, a third kind of voice enters the story of the modern social contract. The fixity of the modern state is founded on what Rousseau calls "the voice of duty."[593] Echoing Kant and Aristotle, civil society is made possible through moral freedom; this morality is a duty or obligation that is universal in man and in accordance with man's reason.[594] The "voice of duty" is a commitment that one has to morality based on the reason of man and distinct from the irrationality of animals.[595] Indeed, the social contract is made possible only on the basis of a distinction between the "stupid, limited animal" and the "intelligent being and a man."[596] Yet if the law is originally sung by the legislator-poet in the *Essay*, the "voice of duty" is the mimetic obligation of the people to the legislator's law.[597] Still the people themselves not only show their allegiance to the sovereign law of the modern Republic through the "voice of duty," but also through *silence*. When representatives or leaders of the people make expressions of the general will or the Sovereign, "in such a case, one ought to presume the consent of the people from universal silence."[598]

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Why can't modern citizens assemble and speak for themselves? Why can't Rousseau imagine a democracy that is outside of or even against the State? One

[590] Ibid., 166.
[591] Ibid., 167.
[592] Ibid., 170.
[593] Ibid., 141.
[594] Ibid., 141-2.
[595] Ibid., 141.
[596] Ibid.
[597] Ibid., 141-2. Cf. Aristotle's legislator in Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* who legislates a morality that is in accordance with reason.
[598] Ibid., 145.

answer that he gives is the problem of *hierarchy*: "a great equality of ranks and of fortunes" including "equality of rights and authority" "could not subsist for long."[599] The other reason that he gives is the problem of *scale*: that participation would require communities and cities, not large States,[600] and when the State dissolves this form of government generally take the name anarchy.[601] The final answer that he gives is a problem of the *imagination*: it is "unimaginable" that people would constantly assemble to attend public affairs.[602] Rousseau seems adamant that "a genuine Democracy has never existed and never will exist"[603] and therefore is suitable only to the Gods, but not to men.[604]

And yet at the close of Book III, Rousseau suggests otherwise. Like the passage in Plato's *Laws*, Rousseau raises the possibility of *disquiet*. At the end of Book III, Rousseau leaves open the possibility of the withering away of the modern State and the institution of Representation by way of the peoples' voices themselves. As Rousseau writes, the voice of the People, i.e. the State, is only a stand-in for the people themselves, and "the instant the People is legitimately assembled as a Sovereign body, all jurisdiction of the Government ceases, the executive power is suspended, and the person of the humblest Citizen is as sacred and inviolable as that of the first Magistrate; because where the Represented person is, there is no longer any Representative."[605]

"Among the Greeks," writes Rousseau, "everything the People had to do, it did by itself. It was constantly assembled at the public square."[606] Here Rousseau once

[599] Ibid., 174.
[600] Ibid., 173.
[601] Ibid., 187.
[602] Ibid., 173.
[603] Ibid., 173.
[604] Ibid., 174.
[605] Ibid., 191.
[606]Ibid., 193.

again imagines an assembly of many, all-varied voices together.[607] Modern democracy would require, for Rousseau, interruptions of sovereign law, representation, and discourse (the voice of duty) by an assembly composed of bare voices. Such an intervention would be the rupture of polyphony — that is, the unhinging of the voice from the discourse of the "legislators" and the "officers of the sovereign."

The problem is that Rousseau's State seems to forbid this kind of assembly by excluding bare voices at the expense of a figure or body who heralds itself as the Voice of the People. Rousseau tells us in the *Social Contract* that the association that characterizes sovereignty is composed of "as many members as there are voices in the assembly,"[608] but then says that "every assembly of the People that has not been called by the magistrates…ought to be considered as illegitimate and everything done at it as null; because the order to assemble should itself emanate from the law."[609] In both the *Essay* and the *Social Contract*, these voices are ultimately reduced back to a few excellent voices or even one originary voice.

Elsewhere in the *Social Contract*, Rousseau limits the voices in the assembly to a certain few: they are the voices of a man who "consult(s) his reason"; voices which are not those of the "stupid, limited animal" but those of an "intelligent being and a man"[610]; and finally, voices with proper moral character.[611] The possibility of a chorus — a modern, polyvocal festival or an assembly of many voices — is given up by Rousseau. Although he celebrates a politics of many voices in both the *Social Contract* and the *Essay*, these voices are always reducible to the voices of a few or even to a single legislator who claim to be the voice of the people.

The admission that democracy is only possible in a community of gods has one principle outcome: the modern state will turn away from participatory democracy and

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[607] It is as if he recalls Empedocles, that rare democrat in the history of philosophy, who writes often of a mixture of voices.

[608] Ibid., 139.

[609] Ibid., 190.

[610] Ibid., 141.

[611] Ibid., 142.

toward a politics of representation. It is the issue of scale and unequal rank that seems to make modern democracy impossible for Rousseau. And yet he maintains that the example of the large Roman assembly, the use of the lot, and the spontaneous assembly of the people suggest paths for a rebirth of participatory politics.

But so long as the distinction is maintained between the beautiful voice of nature and polyphonic noise — that is, mere sounds that do not express discourse — it is impossible to pursue a politics outside of the paradigm of the distinction between the rulers and the ruled. In this regard, Derrida's critique of the voice of nature will show just how the bare voice is a degenerate thing in the margins. The voice is not only the expression of the ideal of freedom and democracy for Rousseau. It is also the sound of the pure savage, the animal voice, which lacks speech and is thereby forced outside of Rousseau's democratic assembly.

The first voice governs — from Plato to Rousseau — on the basis of its *logos*, its ability make present in speech what would otherwise only exist in ideal forms, say Plato. This partition is founded on the distinction between the political animal, who has *logos*, and the animal forced on the other side of this partition because it has only *phōnē*. It is this other form of voice — the bare voice that remains outside of politics and outside of the law — that one wishes Derrida could take up once more. But since he cannot, it is up to us, the readers of Derrida, to inherit a question that is raised only briefly in *Of Grammatology*: what of those other, bare voices in Rousseau that are outside of the law, excluded from the democratic assembly, and have no voice in modern politics? What of the spontaneous assembly of those other voices who never agreed to the rules of modern politics in the first place?

CHAPTER THREE

Sous les pavés

> …[I]n 68…instead of developing and advancing visions and previsions, predilections and forecasts, models and forms, preference was given to greeting the present of an irruption or disruption that introduced no new figure, agency, or authority…. What is important, in this regard, is…that "authority" cannot be defined by any preexisting authorization (whether institutional, canonical, or based on some norm) but can only proceed from a desire that expresses itself or recognizes itself in it…. If democracy has a sense, it would be that of having available to it no identifiable authority proceeding from a place or impetus other than those of a desire — of a will, an awaiting, a thought — where what is expressed and recognized is a true possibility of being *all together, all and each one among all*…. Sixty-eight recalls this all at once, in the present of an affirmation that first of all wants to be freed from every identification.
>
> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*[612]

> If throughout the world today all theatrical audacity declares its fidelity to Artaud…then the question of the theater of cruelty, of its present inexistence and its implacable necessity, has the value of a *historic* question.
>
> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*[613]

I. A Modern Reconsideration of Polyphony

We have attempted to chart out how participatory democracy was prohibited after the birth of sovereignty. We have shown that the more radical tool that registered the merit of sovereign legislators from Plato to modern times was always a kind of exceptional speech — a distinction in language that honored some and excluded others from political participation. This distinction in speech occurred simultaneously with a performance culture of the self or the individual: a kind of theatric and civic space that gave merits and honors to certain celebrities at the exclusion of the multitude. Through this privileged form of speech, the participatory festival was replaced by a spectacle in which one or two professional actors dominated

[612] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 14.

[613] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 233.

the stage and law at once, while others were relegated to the status of spectators. An *archē* was imposed. Out of speech, delivered.

The thesis of this text is that democracy occurs not in the institutions or rights that are attached to the name, but through its performance or choreography. But given the kind of modern republics in which we live, we must first ask another question: How would we carefully deconstruct this history's edifice of *logos* as proper, authoritative speech — either that of a professional actor in the theater, or that of a professional politician?

* * *

Throughout the 1960s, a flurry of texts, performances, and art collectives appear critiquing the various iterations of *logos*. They take issue, often playfully, with the culture of the self and the ascendancy of the individual, and with authority and sovereignty in every form. But unlike many of critiques of reason in Romanticism, which were largely moral and apolitical, the critiques of the 1960s make no separation between philosophy and politics. In fact, they were often closely connected with a broader political current that was underway.

One the critiques of *logos* and *archē* at this time is found in the 1967 writings of Jacques Derrida. It is with the publication of *Of Grammatology* in 1967 in particular that Derrida critiques speech as the metaphysical basis for Rousseau's vision of modern democratic assembly. Derrida is especially apt to note that Rousseau's work is uniquely political — that, like Plato and Aristotle before him, he devises modern democracy on the basis of his poetics of speech. As Derrida puts it, Rousseau's writings on music, language, and politics are closely interconnected: he thinks about a new social contract precisely as a "unanimous people assembled in the self-presence of their speech."[614]

[614] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 134, 170.

This chapter will discuss Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, and in particular the section on *mimēsis* in his reading of Rousseau. This is not for the sake of mythologizing Derrida himself, however. We only read this text as one text in a larger historic moment, and we only consider it in an attempt to open up an ambiguity or undecidability in modern democracy, which Derrida's text seems to rediscover in his critique of *logos*. In his discussion of Rousseau's genealogy of language, what Derrida offers in *Of Grammatology* is one of the first, sustained critiques of the supposedly metaphysical basis at the root of modern democracy. But it is within this context that both Derrida and Rousseau's texts also hint at another kind of language and democracy altogether somewhat haphazardly and without elaboration.

* * *

Although Derrida's text is focused on writing, in the end he says something about the bare voice without wishing to say it. It is perhaps not even known that Rousseau's *Essay* dwells on the historical event of *polyphōnia* in revolutionary Athenian politics. Or that in his section on "Imitation," Derrida focuses on the Plutarch's condemnation of *polyphōnia* without making reference to it or following its history. Unlike Rousseau, who calls the Athenian event of *polyphōnia* the degeneration of Western language and politics, Derrida celebrates this "degeneration" as a deconstruction of *logos* and *archē*.

Derrida also opens up the possibility of a different kind of voice to be taken up at a later time. At one point, Derrida writes: "*It is in the context of this possibility that one must pose the problem of the cry—of that which one has always excluded, pushing it into the area of animality or of madness, like the myth of the inarticulate cry—and the problem of speech (voice) within the history of life*."[615]

The examination of *polyphōnia* in Rousseau's *Essay* rediscovers the possibility of

[615] Italics mine.

the bare voice — a voice that could never be reduced to *logos* and therefore falls outside of the history of phonocentrism and the critique of Derrida. But in addition to opening the way for the possibility of a very different notion of language, this thought simultaneously opens up the possibility of a very different kind of democracy that does not look at all like the modern democratic republic.

This possibility of a different sort of democracy — a democracy of the bare voice — lies latent like a fault line not only in the work of Derrida, but also in works by Rousseau that outline the basis for modern, representative democracy. One could even say that Derrida and Rousseau's discussions of *polyphōnia* suggest a gap or space at the heart of the transition from modern to postmodern democratic thought.

This third and final chapter will concern the birth of a new notion of participatory democracy from without of Rousseau's thought, but also from out of 1960s thought in France and a rethinking of performance in particular. We begin by outlining Derrida's reading of Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* — the text that Rousseau publishes in the same year as his major political work, the *Social Contract*. We offer uncharted possibilities, not solutions, through a reading of Rousseau and Derrida's texts. We call for a rethinking of Rousseau's *Social Contract* through his writings on language and the theater. And we suggest, alongside a "historical" text by Derrida on the theater, published in the 1960s, how we might think a new democracy out of the theater.

How do we perform the next democracy? How do we choreograph it as if it were an action a stage?

II. Rousseau's Chorus

Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* is a history of politics and language. It paints a romantic utopia that is *prior* to the politics of the present and based on a

certain orality. It is in some ways a memory piece; a way of recalling a dream. As a history of transformative events, it could also be called a genealogy — one on par with Plato's account of democratic revolution in the *Laws*.

Rousseau's *Essay* is as much of a remembrance of an ancient language as it is the "ancient memory" of liberty, as Rousseau, following Machiavelli, puts it. This "ancient memory" begins with a public square that was once filled with an assembly of beautiful voices. What is noteworthy for contemporary readers is just how marginal Rousseau's assembly is: the assemblage that he announces is composed of irregularities, anomalies, "multitudes of sounds or intervals that do not enter into [the harmonic] system."[616] The multitude is seemingly peripheral — outside of the current system and pieced together in the outskirts.

For Rousseau, the progress of reason and its *modus operandi*, harmony, has been responsible for the reduction of the diversity, the plurality, and the difference of each voice since Plato.[617] Harmony is responsible for the fact that voices no longer assemble in public space, hold festivals, or have local, independent theater. Thus, unlike our Greek and even Roman predecessors, we moderns speak a discourse of monologue and isolation everyday without even knowing it. What has replaced those ancient citizen voices in public forums is the triumph of "harmony," writes Rousseau, and "there is no other harmony than unison."[618]

Because "it is impossible for a people to remain free and speak that language,"[619] a different kind of language is needed altogether. But Rousseau is incredibly careful to describe exactly what kind of language would be characteristic of this assembly of irregular voices. The voices that will bring about this assembly cannot

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[616] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7, ed., trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England, 1998), 323.

[617] Ibid., 329.

[618] Ibid., 322.

[619] Ibid.

be the expression of reason.[620] Thus Rousseau distinguishes between *speech,* which is rational expression, and the *voice of nature,* which is always anterior or posterior to the voice of reason.[621] Unlike speech, these voices would find their basis in the senses or in what Rousseau calls their "life" or "energy."[622]

Whatever Derrida may say about the "ideality" of Rousseau's voice of nature, here Rousseau is as much at odds with Enlightenment reason as Foucault's notion of the "end of man." In its sensuality, the voice can never be systematic or methodical, but always remains fragmented, aphoristic, shifting in the whims of mood and tones.[623] It never names objects from the perspective of reason so as not to harness them with an assigned meaning.[624] And it offers no proper signified, proper objects, or fixed identities.

The alternative to the voice of reason for Rousseau is *many, diverse voices*. Modern, harmonic language has to be replaced not by one voice, but by a motley assemblage of voices that takes place in public space as a performance or event. Thus the voice for Rousseau is always a multitude: a "diversity of sounds,"[625] composed not of one voice, but of "very different voices,"[626] "many irregularities and anomalies,"[627] "many accents" compared to "only three or four in speech."[628] What must be performed again according to Rousseau is a kind of multitude: "sounds…infinite in

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[620] Ibid., 293.

[621] What will concern us later is whether this bare voice (without reason) equals something like bare life.

[622] Rousseau tells us that the voice has "a hundred times more energy than speech" alone (*Essay*, 322) and that the most lively cries are cries and groans (*Essay*, 295). This "life" of the voice extends directly into the realm of sound.

[623] Ibid., 293.

[624] Ibid., 294. Here though, in Chapter 3, Rousseau also introduces the notion of the "genuine form" of objects. In some ways, this notion resembles the Platonic idea of *mimēsis* that we find in Book 10 of Plato's *Republic*.

[625] Ibid., 302.

[626] Ibid., 300.

[627] Ibid., 296, 323.

[628] Ibid., 295.

number."[629] A voice as diverse and many in number as its people, yet so unique and singular that it "belong[s] only in the place it is found."[630]

The instance of a multiplicity of sounds is simultaneous for Rousseau with authentic political assembly. Rousseau returns to this ancient memory as a way of heralding a new political future. The *Essay* is a remembrance — much more than nostalgia — of when peoples "assembled in the open air" and spoke to one another in a patchwork assemblage of voices.[631] As Rousseau puts it in the *Essay*, "when the first festivals took place" and "feet leaped with joy," "the voice accompanied it with passionate accents" and "[t]here, finally, was the true cradle of peoples" and "the first fires of love."[632] As he writes fondly, "[I]t was easy to make oneself heard by the people in the public square."[633] This is also what Rousseau calls "the pleasure of not being alone"[634] — the pleasure of being "mingled together" or "assembled."

But the modern corruption and end of this vocal assembly is outlined in Chapter 19 of the *Essay*, Rousseau's chapter on *polyphōnia* or the degeneration of language, which is incidentally the chapter that Derrida focuses on in his section called "Imitation." For Rousseau, the historical event that separated melody from discourse and caused speech to degenerate was the historical event of *polyphōnia* in ancient Athens.

Rousseau makes a distinction between enharmonic notes — or notes outside of the proper harmonic scale — and the event of *polyphōnia* as it was cited by the

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[629] Ibid.

[630] Ibid., 300, 296. This is not to say that it is overly precise in the systematic way of dull academic treatises.

[631] Ibid., 332. The problem with 18th Century politics for Rousseau is that its first principle is this: remain scattered; do not assemble; "it is not necessary to assemble…," Rousseau, *Essay*, 332. What politics has systematically "eliminated" or "effaced" or "destroyed" to use Rousseau's terms is not simply *the voice*, but more specifically the diversity of sounds that used to ring out in public space before the age of reason, before philosophy and its discourse was instituted through elite academies, before the modern state filled the empty agora with religion, arms, and cash.

[632] Ibid., 314.

[633] Ibid., 332.

[634] Ibid., 314.

Plutarch. Whereas enharmonic notes were what gave rise to a diversity of voices in the free public square, *polyphōnia* was the beginning of the degeneration of language and politics. If enharmonic notes amounted to a kind of beautiful fugue, *polyphōnia* amounted to sheer cacophony and noise.

Why then does Rousseau speak of the diversity of sounds and the festival in the first half of the *Essay* if only to critique the historical event of polyphony as the cause of language's degeneration? Why does he celebrate notes outside of the traditional scale of harmony — enharmonic notes — but then prohibits the specific event of *polyphōnia* in the Plutarch's genealogy of music? What was it about the specific instance or event of *polyphōnia* that was so disastrous for Rousseau's idea of free assembly?

III. 1967: The Critique of *Logos* and Phonocentrism

There is little interest in carefully rehearsing Derrida's critique of the voice in a style that Cunningham would deride as repertory theater and Levinas as the *déjà dit*. And yet it seems necessary to begin our contemporary discussion of democracy by closely *reading* Derrida's 1967 discussion of Rousseau's *Essay* in *Of Grammatology*. In doing so, we merely wish to highlight or take up a complication that arises in Derrida's text with regard to the voice.

Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Language* is a politics of diverse voices and democratic assembly. And yet for Derrida, Rousseau's *Essay* is one more instance in which a so-called prior orality serves as the ultimate expression of metaphysics and sovereignty. Despite Rousseau's claims that the voice of nature is prior or posterior to metaphysical speech, Derrida argues that Rousseau's voice is "a modification well within the Platonic diagram" and falls within a broader history of logocentrism.[635]

[635] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 17-18.

Rousseau, he writes, merely "repeats the Platonic gesture by referring to another model of presence: self-presence in the senses, in the sensible cogito, which simultaneously carries in itself the inscription of divine law."[636]

For Derrida, Rousseau's festive mélange is bathed in a metaphysics that is *opposed* to servitude, and is only possible through another poetics of language that *excludes*. In short, this model of "democracy" extends the ancient logic of sovereignty; sovereignty has undergone a metamorphosis and is now demarcated by a new binary and a new logic of exclusion that repurposes the ancient language of "freedom." This new gesture of sovereignty, in other words, now comes in the form of a division between those who are inside and those who are outside of the free assembly.[637]

But like Plato, this distinction or binary is always based on a more fundamental division: language. The basic problem with Rousseau's account of modern freedom in the *Essay*, for Derrida, is Rousseau's overarching linguistic distinction between the voices of the people and writing.[638] A series of oppositions is set up by Rousseau a line is drawn with writing and servitude on one side, and the voices of the people and freedom on the other. On the side of the voice, we find politico-linguistic liberty, the South, oral accents, vowels, the local province, morality, and democratic assembly.[639] On the side of writing, by contrast, we find servitude, the North, what is outside of the law and proper morals, articulation (in distinction from accent), consonants rather than vowels, and, finally, a capital, or a centralized, distant power.[640]

As Derrida notes, "…speech always presents itself as the best expression of liberty" for Rousseau.[641] This means that the voice of nature is what gathers or binds the free community for Rousseau; it is the "unanimous people assembled in the self-

[636] Ibid., 17.
[637] Ibid., 170.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Ibid., 202, 201.
[640] Ibid.
[641] Ibid., 168.

presence of their speech."[642] Writing, by contrast, is depicted as the "dispersal of peoples unified as bodies and the beginning of their enslavement."[643] As Derrida concludes: "*The Essay on the Origin of Languages* opposes speech to writing as presence to absence and liberty to servitude."[644]

The difference between democracy and servitude, then, is based upon an opposition between the voice and writing — between the romantic voice of nature, on the one hand, and culture and language on the other. If the voice is the pure origin of society and true democratic assembly, language and culture is an evil that encroaches from outside or from the margins, from the exteriority of the world, from a place that is said to be unfree.[645] Just as Plato's *logos* builds or expresses the *archē* for Plato's *Republic*, so too Rousseau's voice of nature expresses the metaphysical basis for modern democratic assembly. A new binary is formed — a new, overarching distinction between the voice, which builds a home for this *archē*, and writing, which excludes others who dwell there as strangers.

Thus, while the voice for Rousseau is that which originally names or expresses divine law and lawful assembly, writing is somehow outside of divine law, liberty, and the people for Rousseau.[646] Just as *logos* institutes *archē* and sovereignty in Plato's *Republic*, so too Rousseau's *Essay* defines political sovereignty on the basis of a distinction in language. In the end, what Derrida asks this framer of modern democracy is very curious indeed: What is it exactly that is impure, degenerate, and outside the locus of modern "democratic" politics for Rousseau? What falls outside of the pure *archē* of "democracy" — a notion that is originally at odds with democracy for the Greeks? And finally, how can we speak of any pure *telos* or final goal that would seem to end democracy's always unfinished history?

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[642] Ibid., 134, 170.
[643] Ibid., 170.
[644] Ibid., 168.
[645] Ibid., 145; 168.
[646] Ibid., 17; Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 318.

IV. Phonogrammatology, or *Polyphōnia*

By positioning the voice as the expression of both democracy's true origin and its eschatological savior, Rousseau's *Essay* gives a certain kind of voice complete and total privilege.[647] This is what Derrida will call an *archeo-teleology*: a history that has an absolute origin (the voice), a fall (into writing), and a return to a pure and final *telos* (the reanimation of the voice). Thus Derrida wishes to interrupt this master narrative — to disrupt its history, even — by calling the purity of the *archē* of the voice into question through the complication of another form of language, *writing*.

In the section on "Imitation," Derrida hinges his entire analysis — if he may be said to hinge, but not center — on the notion of *writing*. The crucial point for Derrida occurs in Rousseau's genealogy of how language, music, and politics came to degenerate.[648] In order to show that Rousseau's pure origin was already impure or contaminated from the start, Derrida concerns his reading with the chapters of Rousseau's *Essay* on the degeneration of music and politics — Chapter 19, entitled "How Music Has Degenerated," and Chapter 20, titled "Relationship of Languages to Governments."

And yet the degeneration of music that Rousseau speaks of in these chapters is not *writing*, as Derrida would have us think. It is the problem of the *bare voice*. It is the historical event of *polyphōnia* that the Plutarch and others recounted and which philosophers held responsible for a participatory aesthetics that led to direct democracy. Rousseau thus describes the event not as an event of writing, but as the birth of what he calls noise or a kind of sound that unhinges itself from proper discourse and assumes a separate, anarchic existence.

Derrida will make much of Rousseau's "twofold voice of nature." But this separation of the twofold that caused this degeneration was when song became

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[647] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 198.
[648] Ibid., 195.

separate from speech or words in the historical event of *polyphōnia*. As Rousseau writes, "[M]elody, beginning to no longer be so attached to discourse, imperceptibly assumed a separate existence, and music became more independent of the words."[649] The result was that "perfected harmonious language" was soon lost: the twofold voice of nature gave way to a separation in language.[650] Namely, there was a fissure in language between *song*, or the voice of nature, and what Rousseau calls *speech*, or a kind of discourse or *logos* detached from melody.

On Derrida's reading, this separation between song and speech — the fracture that is responsible for the degeneration of music — always "has the form of writing."[651] As Derrida writes, this degeneration began when music began to privilege *harmony* — that is, the science or calculation of intervals that takes the form of writing — over the primary voice or melody.[652] This so-called degeneration occurred for Derrida as a descent from the voice to writing, from song to harmony, from liberty to servitude, from nature to culture. As Derrida quotes Rousseau, "To the degree that the language improved, melody, being governed by new rules, imperceptibly lost its former energy, and the calculus of intervals was substituted for nicety of inflection."[653] Melody was forgotten and the attention of musicians was turned completely towards harmony.[654] The pure voice — melody, oral accents, song, etc. — came to be usurped and replaced by a science of writing, i.e. harmony, which simultaneously brought the people into servitude.

A complication emerges here, however. Derrida does not consider Rousseau's description of this separation or degeneration closely enough. First, Rousseau explains that what resulted from this separation in speech was, on the one hand, a form of song without speech or what Rousseau calls mere *noise*. This *noise* was

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[649] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 329.
[650] Ibid.
[651] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 199.
[652] Ibid.
[653] Ibid.
[654] Ibid.

something like song that unhinged itself from discourse and is very similar to descriptions of *polyphōnia* in Plato's *Laws* and *Republic*. It is sound that has no relationship to proper speech or *logos*. On the other side of this division, this separation would have resulted for Rousseau in philosophy: in a form of speech without song or accent that Rousseau attributes to Plato or *logos*. This outcome was equally disastrous according to Rousseau.

Most importantly, Derrida does not consider the history of *polyphōnia*: Rousseau cites the historical reason for the separation between song and speech as the event of polyphony that occurred in the years surrounding the Athenian revolution from aristocracy to democracy. He footnotes the Plutarch's discussion of *polyphōnia* and comments on chapters 29 and 30 of the ancient commentary in order to describe exactly how and when the separation of song and speech came to pass. He refers to polyphony directly as "melody…no longer…attached to discourse"[655] and claims that it is the historical cause for music's degeneration and, subsequently, the loss of authentic political assembly.[656] Likewise, Rousseau's *Essay* published in the same year as the *Social Contract* outlines the initial confines of the modern democratic assembly as one that excludes *polyphōnia* and bare voices.

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Recall that, for Derrida, the project of grammatology is literally on the line: Derrida wishes to note above all that this fissure or fracture in language takes the form of writing for Rousseau[657] that writing *lies between* melody and discourse *within* the supposedly pure origin of language like bacteria already fermenting inside of a perfectly red apple. The complication that emerges is that while Rousseau does

[655] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 329.

[656] Ibid., 330: "perfected harmonious language" was lost and Europe was "inundated with barbarians and enslaved by the unlearned."

[657] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 199.

critique writing, writing and grammar were only a remedy for a more originary problem: the problem of *noise* — that is, the bare noise of *polyphōnia*, the initial result of the separation of melody and speech.

Let us consider Rousseau's description of the separation or degeneration of language in full in the crucial chapter, Chapter 19. Notice that, indeed, at first, Rousseau levels his criticisms at grammar, writing:

> [A]s language was perfected, melody imperceptibly lost its ancient energy by imposing new rules upon itself, and the calculation of intervals was substituted for the subtlety of inflections. It is in this way, for example, that the practice of the enharmonic genus was gradually eliminated. Once theaters had assumed a regular form, one no longer sang in them except in the prescribed modes, and in proportion as the rules of imitation were multiplied imitative language grew weaker. The study of philosophy and the progress of reason, having perfected grammar, deprived language of that lively and passionate tone which had at first made it so tuneful.[658]

But then Rousseau tells us how this problem began long before this — namely, in the initial degeneration of language in the 6th and 5th Centuries caused by the event of *polyphōnia*, after which writing, philosophy, and speech devoid of music became a supplement for a bygone, twofold voice of nature:

> From the time of Menalippides and Philoxenus, instrumental players — who were at first the employees of the Poets and worked only under them and, so to speak, at their dictation — became independent of them, and it is of this license that Music complains so bitterly in the Comedy by Pherecrates, a passage of which Plutarch has preserved for us. Thus melody, beginning to no longer be so attached to discourse, imperceptibly assumed a separate existence, and music became more independent of the words. That was also when the wonders that it had produced when it was only the accent and the harmony of poetry gradually ceased, and when it gave to poetry that dominion over the passions which speech has since exercised only over reason.[659]

Rousseau cites the Plutarch's description of *polyphōnia* as the *initial* degeneration of language — the separation that resulted in what Rousseau here calls "speech," as in Plato's, and later, when referring to music, calls "noise." What Derrida

[658] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 329.
[659] Ibid.

overlooks is not only the ancient history of *polyphōnia*, but also the notion of bare "noise" the remaining "melody…no longer…attached to discourse…[that] assumed a separate existence."[660]

Derrida reiterates: the separation of song and speech always "has the form of writing."[661] As he quotes Rousseau in a different context in *Of Grammatology*, "[W]riting serves only as a supplement to speech."[662] Writing is described as "a certain growth of "evil."[663] What Derrida wishes to note is that this degeneration into writing had in fact always already begun: the voice of nature was always already lost, the separation of song and speech had always already taken place, and degenerate writing was always already at the site of the *archē*. As Derrida writes, "The history that follows the origin…is nothing but the story of the separation between song and speech," but "it must be said that…this history had no prehistory. Degeneration as separation, severing of voice and song, has always already begun."[664] "[S]ong and speech…had…always already begun to separate themselves."[665] Thus rather than a pure origin that puts this separation and outside of itself, that is, outside of its pure origin, Derrida shows that the *beginning* or *archē* had always already involved a "difference which fractured the origin."[666]

But Rousseau's description of the degeneration of language and politics complicates or perhaps, extends Derrida's account. Rousseau characterizes the separation of song and speech as the historical *polyphōnia* of the poet Lasos and the musicians Menalippides and Philoxenus in Rousseau's words, when "melody, beginning to be no longer attached to discourse, imperceptibly assumed a separate

[660] Ibid.
[661] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 199.
[662] Ibid., 144.
[663] Ibid., 199.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Ibid.

existence, and music became more independent of the words."[667] This means that the degeneration and contamination of language and the *archē* — the separation of song and speech — is not primarily the degeneration of music into harmony or writing as Derrida had thought. Rather, Rousseau carefully explains that the separation between melody and discourse leaves us with the independent existence of bare *sound*.[668]

As Rousseau describes the historical phenomenon of *polyphōnia* as unharmonic, without morality, without authentic politics, and ultimately the cause of the degeneration of language, it is not primarily a degenerate writing that remains outside of or in the margins of politics, but much more radically a degenerate type of *phōnē* or voice. But here it is not a problem of thinking *contre* Derrida. In fact, what the reference to *polyphōnia* means is that, upon or after Derrida's analysis, Rousseau's *archē* would contain not one, but two fissures, not merely a grammatology that deconstructs the origin by splitting it and supplementing it, but a *phonogrammatology* that splits it twice over.

The contamination of *archē*, of origin and sovereignty — that is, the separation between song and speech — results from a polyphony that fissures the metaphysical voice and supplements it not only with the growth of writing, but also with the threat of bare noise. This "license" first occurred for Rousseau as a performance in the theater: when "instrumental players — who were at first the employees of the Poets and worked only under them and, so to speak, at their dictation — became independent of them."[669] What this means is that pure, lawful song was always already contaminated at the site of the *archē* with not only writing, but even more so, with the bare voice.

Unfortunately, Derrida will make no distinction in his writings between the various iterations of *logos* — the phonic voice is always the physical expression of metaphysics, whether one of *logos*, reason, or the divine. As Derrida writes, "[L]ogocentrism…is also a phonocentrism: the absolute proximity of voice and

[667] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 329.
[668] Ibid., 330.
[669] Ibid., 329.

Being…the strange privilege of sound in idealization, the production of the concept and the self-presence of the subject."[670]

But in his critique of the voice, it may also be said that Derrida's writings were directed towards a *certain* kind of voice — one that expressed pure reason or the divine and thus exhibited the physical presence of some greater invisible that was perhaps otherwise too great to be conceived. Thus I would like to consider alongside Derrida whether there remains another side to the voice to be taken up or considered now: the bare voice, placed at the margins by modern institutional politics, as indicated by Rousseau, but which today finds itself no longer primarily in a time of deconstruction, but rather in a time of amassing heaps of enunciation.

IV. Complications

What I wish to point out in this chapter is simply a complication that arises in both Rousseau and Derrida's texts concerning this division or split in modern democracy — a split or division that is located more fundamentally within a distinction in language. Just as Derrida speaks of Rousseau as saying something "without wishing to say it," we also find a difference between what Derrida means to say and what he seems to notice somewhat haphazardly. According to Rousseau in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, the degeneration of language and politics was not the phenomenon of writing, as Derrida suggests. It was the historical event of polyphony that was cited in the Plutarch's commentary on music and forbidden in Plato and Aristotle's political thought. In fact, Rousseau will blame the degeneration of language and politics in his essay not on writing, but on the unhinging event of *polyphōnia*. Rousseau's entire *Essay* is the marginalization of the bare voice.

[670] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 11-12.

Derrida does not seem to notice this. Or at least, he does not follow Rousseau's footnote to the revolutionary event in poetics that the Plutarch and others recount for us. And yet in taking up Rousseau's *Essay*, Derrida's deconstruction of the voice of nature lays bare not only an originary difference between the voice and writing; it also uncovers the ancient phenomenon of *polyphōnia* and a fissure or difference at the heart of the voice itself. This second fissure in the voice is the difference between song as presence, on the one hand, as that which includes speech, and, on the other hand, the resulting separation of song and speech: a bare voice that Rousseau calls sheer noise.

Yet this split within the voice itself also complicates the project of *Grammatology* in its critique of Rousseau's democratic "voice of nature." The text uncovers, perhaps without wishing to uncover, a "bare voice" that is just as degenerate as writing a voice that does not express *logos*, ideality, or proper imitation, and does not have any relationship to a metaphysical origin or *archē* that suspends democracy. As such, it falls well outside of the critique of phonocentrism in *Of Grammatology*.

What remains to be taken up is not only the nature of the bare voice itself, but also the relationship of the bare voice to the problem of democracy in Rousseau. What would the ramifications be for democracy if Rousseau's *Essay* implies a second fissure between the bare voice and the voice of nature and uses this distinction to define sovereignty and authentic assembly? What should one make of the politics of the bare voice with regard to modern democracy and a democracy that is still to come?

As know from our earlier discussion of *polyphōnia*, the history of this event of bare voices was held to be responsible by philosophers for a revolutionary and democratic act that resulted in a transition from aristocracy to direct democracy. With the publication of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida shows that a privileged form of speech not only serves as the metaphysical basis for Rousseau's vision of modern assembly. The reconsideration of *polyphōnia* in Derrida's writings appears in the 1960s like a signpost for a new kind of democracy.

Even though modern democracy was supposed to extend an invitation to excluded voices, it merely replaced feudalism with an aristocracy just like the Greeks did after the Battle of Salamis, which Plato recounts carefully for us in the *Laws* before he recounts the democratic revolution of *polyphōnia*. To be sure, the rediscovery of this "other side" of the voice in philosophy would be a direct consequence of Derrida's critique. In fact, it is only through Derrida critique of the metaphysics of the voice that the notion of the bare voice is able to be thought at all. It is as if Derrida's deconstruction of the now cracked and brittled *metaphysical* voice allows one to begin to take up a new question underneath the well-worn pavement: namely, the question of the bare voice, a degenerate thing in the margins in Rousseau's notion of modern "democratic" assembly.

V. The Fissure in the Voice

From the speech of the oracle at Delphi in ancient Greece, to the divine voice that Socrates carries inside of him in the *Apology*, to the transformational voice of God that bids Augustine to pick up a Bible and read. From the Protestant *vocation* or *calling* to the modern *voice of reason* to the romantic *voice of nature*. From the *expression* of phenomenologists to the *saying* of Being and even to the saying of the Other, Derrida observes that there is a special place reserved in Western philosophy for a certain kind of voice the predominant sort of voice that has occupied a primary position in archic thought since the Greeks: the *logos* of the ancient Greeks, its translation by Cicero as *ratio*, and its re-translation as *speech* in more modern times.

The bare voice, by contrast, only enters the story of philosophy to serve the purpose of a distinction that privileges one sovereign voice at the exclusion of another. Like writing, the bare voice is the exterior that circumscribes the perimeter of true discourse; it is the result of a delimitation in which case the bare voice exists outside

of or in the margins of true discourse because of an inherent, metaphysical lack. As such, bare voices have no reason to appear in public space. No ground or basis for participation. With voices, they are voiceless.

This distinction in language is not primarily a distinction between the voice and writing, however, but rather a fissure within the voice itself. For Heraclitus, it is the difference between his own speech and the voices of the many. For Plato, it is a division that makes it possible to distinguish a true ruler from those who ought to be ruled. For Aristotle, it is a line drawn at the opening of the *Politics* between those who are able to participate in politics with *phonē semantikē*, or rational speech, and those who cannot participate in politics because of their bare voice (*phonē*).

The important point to note is that in each case this distinction — the distinction between the bare voice and rational speech — forms the basis for political and intellectual participation and non-participation. Note, for instance, how Aristotle distinguishes between the voice and speech at the opening of the *Politics* so that it forms the basis for participation. Speech or *phonē semantikē* is what separates humans from other animals and slaves and give them a divine and natural superiority: "nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech [*phonē semantikē*]; the voice [*phonē*]…is present among other animals as well…but speech [*phonē semantikē*]…is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals."[671] This superiority gives some people sovereignty in public affairs and without it, "one is incapable of participating."

This fissure between the voice and proper political speech was written into the dramatic education of the *Republic*, where Plato's forbids any voice that detaches itself from the discourse of the *logoi* of the city. The correct discourse of the state must accompany music at all times because sound or melody or song itself without

[671] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 37, 1253a8-28. In this section, those with mere voice and not speech are described as being either "a beast or a god."

discourse is incredibly dangerous to the city.[672] Thus Plato distinguishes between *harmonia*, or speech that harmonizes with the regime and, secondly, forbids that poetry which lacks harmony and speech. He later describes this latter kind of sound as a *polyphōnia* or a multiplicity in sound itself. Polyphonic music is banned from the city because there sound does not conform to discourse. This is why it is most important to "include discourses [*logos*] in music."[673] The city would be faced with a revolution if music became unhinged from speech, or, as Rousseau put it, if "melody…no longer…attached to discourse…assumed a separate existence."[674]

Is Rousseau's *Essay* and *Social Contract* a continuation of this ancient distinction in the name of "democracy"? Although modern democracy was supposed to include all those who had been excluded by the logic of sovereignty, Derrida's analysis allows us to consider how Rousseau distinguishes between two different kinds of voices: the voice as a metaphysical song, which, through imitation, is able to sing with harmony and melody; and secondly, the voice which cannot be reduced to song, which does not imitate, lacks melody *and* harmony, and is described as the scream or cry of a child, the language of a "true savage," or what Rousseau the "complain[t]."[675] The first kind of voice is well within the history of *logos*. It is the voice of song; it is particular to the human being, and distinct from the true savage or animal which lacks speech.[676] Its song imitates true cries, laments, accents, and oral tones; it is the voice of nature, the "beginning" or "all-harmonious voice."[677]

The second kind of voice, the voice that Rousseau seems to prohibit from political participation, is, like Plato and Aristotle, the bare voice that lacks proper

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[672] Pl. *Resp.* 398c.

[673] Pl. Resp. 377e. My translation. Here one thinks that a more accurate translation of *logos* would be discourse rather than speech. At issue is not the quality of the speech, but rather what stories and tales should be permitted or heard. It is only later in the discussion that this word implies the manner in which something must be spoken.

[674] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 329.

[675] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 197.

[676] Ibid.

[677] Ibid., 198.

imitation: it is the *phōnē* or voice that does not conform to the discourse or *logoi* of the state, which Plato seeks to forbid in the *Republic*, and the voice without proper speech that Aristotle excludes from political participation at the outset of the *Politics*. Because this bare voice is supposedly outside of the originary voice of nature, it falls outside of the sovereign assembly. But Rousseau places the blame of the degeneration of morality and politics squarely on the historical event of polyphony that occurred in the years leading up to the first democratic revolution. He footnotes the passage: see *polyphōnia*.

In the following chapter, "Relationship of Languages to Governments," Rousseau continues this discussion of contamination or degeneration of the origin into the realm of politics. Yet even as Rousseau attempts to critique Plato, he repeats Plato's arguments about the threat of polyphony directly. He refers specifically to the event of polyphony that is recounted by the Plutarch as the cause for linguistic and political degeneration. And it is for this reason that despite its claims of being against philosophy, reason, prescribed forms, modes, and grammar Rousseau's so-called overturning of Platonism is, as Derrida notes correctly, "a modification well within the Platonic diagram."[678]

What is remarkable, nevertheless, is how for Rousseau these bare voices "assumed a separate existence." How did they assemble unto themselves and form an assembly in the margins? As Rousseau says, they "shouted sounds, without sweetness, without meter, and without grace"; they came together and became "several voices"; they made a "noise" that seemed pleasant to them.[679] They even formed a new musical movement, and "it is in this way that the practice of descant and of counterpoint began."[680]

What remains to be taken up, then, is not only the nature of the bare voice itself, but also the relationship of the bare voice to the problem of modern democracy.

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[678] Ibid., 17-18.
[679] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 330.
[680] Ibid., 330.

What would the ramifications be for modern democracy if Rousseau's *Essay* — merely one text among many similar texts at this time — implies a second fissure between the bare voice and the voice of nature and uses this distinction to define modern sovereignty as political representation or "officers of the sovereign"?

VI. A Politics of the Bare Voice

At the time of early romantic thought, Rousseau must decide whether to support a radical, participatory democracy like those of the early Greeks or whether to support a mixed constitution in which sovereign leaders or representatives legislate the will of the people for them. This decision, however, is already made in the *Essay* when Rousseau institutes a linguistic division that despite their differences is somehow on par with Plato and Aristotle. Rousseau lays the foundation for the split between the citizens and a legislator in the *Social Contract* by distinguishing between two kinds of voices — those privileged, sacred voices of nature and the voices of those others who produce mere sound or noise. On the one hand, there is what Rousseau calls *song* or the voice as divine expression. On the other hand, there is what Rousseau also refers to as *noise* and what Derrida calls the *cry*.

As we have seen, what remains outside of the voice of nature, and outside of the history of logocentrism or any form of authoritative or originary expression, is what can be called the bare voice — the event of which is described in ancient Greek as a *polyphōnia*. What still remains to be discussed is the relation of this bare voice to Rousseau's notion of democracy. Like Plato, and like the Plutarch, Rousseau's chapter on the degeneration of music is followed immediately by a final chapter entitled "Relation of Languages to Governments." And here Rousseau, despite all of his attempts to critique Plato, finds himself writing in favor of the true orators and critiquing the "servile language" that lacks "eloquence." Rousseau's political examples of the ancient voice of nature, for example, are Herodotus reading his history to the

people of Greece and the contemporary academic trying to make himself heard.[681] Noise without speech, on the other hand, which is neither writing nor speech, is described as something exterior to the assembly – an animal or savage noise, the child's cry or scream, the complaint that must be raised.[682] Noise, then, is outside of both the holy "voice of nature" and the sovereignty that must be included within modern democracy. It is a voice that has no reason to be heard.

If we read Derrida's critique alongside Rousseau's *Essay*, we discover that the bare voice not only remains outside the laws of harmony, but also, as Rousseau writes in Chapter 12 of the *Essay*, outside of law itself.[683] Those with only this second kind of voice are either animals or pure savages and are said to belong to individuals or to a group of individuals who are under no law. In fact, Derrida rightly notes that the degeneration of language for Rousseau is a kind of animality – since, for Rousseau, language is what distinguishes the human from the animal. But in Rousseau's *Essay*, animality refers not to writing, but to a kind of noise or sound, that is, to this second kind of voice which, like writing, has degenerated to a level that is below the proper speech of a human being.[684]

Perhaps most importantly, it should be noted that this second kind of voice does not seem to be included in the unity or community of Rousseau's modern democratic assembly. In Book 1, Chapter 8 of the *Social Contract*, for instance, Rousseau limits the voices in the assembly to a certain few: they are the voices of a man who "consult(s) his reason"; voices which are not those of the "stupid, limited animal" but those of an "intelligent being and a man"[685]; and finally, voices with proper moral character.[686] Rousseau also limits the assembly to the imitation of the "voice of duty." Rousseau tells us in the *Social Contract* that although the association

[681] Ibid., 322.
[682] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 197.
[683] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 318.
[684] Ibid., 330.
[685] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 141.
[686] Ibid., 142.

that characterizes sovereignty is composed of "as many members as there are voices in the assembly,"[687] he then says that "every assembly of the People that has not been called by the magistrates…ought to be considered as illegitimate and everything done at it as null; because the order to assemble should itself emanate from the law."[688]

The voices of savages or animals are distinct from or excluded from modern democracy in this way: this other kind of voice does not describe those who are able to make themselves heard by the people in the public square;[689] and it is distinguished from the eloquent voices of "orators," "musicians," and "scholars"[690] who might take up the role of legislator in order to enact or protect or preserve the general will.

Rousseau's notion of language, then, seems to exclude the voices of the people at the expense of a figure or figures who serve as the voice of the people. In both the *Essay* and the *Social Contract*, the voices of the people are ultimately reduced back to a few excellent voices or even one originary voice.

After the State has been founded by this figure's lawful song, and after representatives have been put into place as the legitimate voice of the people, a third kind of voice enters the story of the modern social contract. The fixity of the modern state is founded on what Rousseau calls "the voice of duty."[691] Echoing Kant and Aristotle, civil society is made possible through moral freedom; this morality is a duty or obligation that is universal in man and in accordance with man's reason.[692] The "voice of duty" is a commitment that one has to morality based on the reason of man and distinct from the irrationality of animals.[693] Indeed, the social contract is made

[687] Ibid., 139.
[688] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 190.
[689] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 332.
[690] Ibid., 319.
[691] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 141.
[692]Ibid., 141-2.
[693] Ibid., 141.

possible only on the basis of a distinction between the "stupid, limited animal" and the "intelligent being and a man."[694]

Thus, if the law is originally sung by the legislator-poet in the *Essay*, the "voice of duty" is the mimetic obligation of the people to the legislator's law.[695] Still the people themselves not only show their allegiance to the sovereign law of the modern Republic through the "voice of duty," but also through *silence*. When representatives or leaders of the people make expressions of the general will or the Sovereign, "in such a case, one ought to presume the consent of the people from universal silence."[696]

The bare voice can only emerge through the event of polyphony. If the voice of nature for Rousseau is the "twofold voice" of song and speech, the event of polyphony is what allows the pure voice to become unhinged from true discourse as a result of a multitude of sound. When the polyphonic event occurs, the voice no longer follows the order of speech or discourse. The result is a degenerate noise that amounts to nothing else but *phōnē* without speech. The metaphysical status of the voice of nature is lost. What remains are what might be called bare voices.

VII. The End of Representation

As we have seen over the last chapter, the founding gesture of modern democracy for Rousseau is ultimately defined by a single sovereign voice: it is when a leader or individual acts in a sovereign way on behalf of the people and legislates the law *through a language so pure it is song*. Once the State and its laws have been decreed and the legislator has instituted the republic, a second group of people comes to speak on behalf of the people: that is, a government, representation, or those whom Rousseau calls "officers of the sovereign."

[694] Ibid.
[695] Ibid., 141-2.
[696] Ibid., 145.

The legislator is thus not the elected leader or governor of the State, but rather the one who "create[s] the institutions" of the State which then make it possible for the birth a new bureaucracy political representation, or "the leaders of Republics."[697] Modern democracy is given over to representation, then to "an intermediate body established between the subjects and the Sovereign for their mutual communication, and charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of…freedom."[698] The "officers of the sovereign"[699] are the legitimate voice of the people.[700]

Why can't the people assemble and speak for themselves in the modern democratic Republic? Rousseau seems adamant that "a genuine Democracy has never existed and never will exist"[701] and therefore is suitable only to the Gods, but not to men.[702]And yet at the close of Book III, Rousseau suggests otherwise. Rousseau leaves open the possibility of the withering away of the modern State and the institution of Representation. While it is well known that Books 1 and 2 of Rousseau's *Social Contract* hand over democracy to representatives or "officers of the sovereign" who are said to enact the general will of the people for them and that this understanding of "democracy" was common among the founders of modern democratic republics what is often unconsidered are the closing passages of Book 3 of the *Social Contract* in which Rousseau warns of a government that no longer represents the interests of the people.

In Book 3 of the *Social Contract*, Rousseau is attempting to articulate an inevitable crisis in representation that would necessitate the revocation of sovereign power. As Rousseau writes, "[T]he instant the People is legitimately assembled as a Sovereign body, all jurisdiction of the Government ceases, the executive power is suspended, and the person of the humblest Citizen is as sacred and inviolable as that

[697] Ibid., 155.
[698] Ibid., 166.
[699] Ibid., 167.
[700] Ibid., 170.
[701] Ibid.
[702] Ibid., 174.

of the first Magistrate; because where the Represented person is, there is no longer any Representative."[703] "Among the Greeks," writes Rousseau, "everything the People had to do, it did by itself. It was constantly assembled at the public square."[704]

Rousseau seems to suggest that modern republics would require interruptions of sovereign law, representation, and discourse (the voice of duty) by an assembly of voices that contested proper political speech or the alleged "sovereignty." Such an intervention would require an unhinging of the voice from the discourse of the "legislators" and the "officers of the sovereign." If representation contributed to problems such as inequality or discontent, all representation had to be suspended. The people had to form new, horizontal assemblies — assemblies that would abolish all distinctions between the rulers and the ruled. The formation of assemblies does not mean that new institutions won't be created, or that the people will assemble forever. But it does indicate the necessity of an interruption in political discourse with the voices of those who never agreed to the rules and laws of the State in the first place, and who feel that the institutions of representation have failed them.

There remains an undecidability in modern democracy within the notion of the voice. The voice is not only the expression of the ideal of freedom and democracy. It is also the sound of the pure savage, the animal voice, which lacks speech and is thereby forced outside of Rousseau's assembly. The first voice governs — from Plato to Rousseau — on the basis of its *logos*, its ability make present in speech what would otherwise only exist in ideal forms, say Plato. But it is this other form of voice — the bare voice that remains outside of politics and outside of the law — that remains to be discussed. Perhaps it is up to us, the readers of Derrida, to inherit a question that is raised only briefly in *Of Grammatology*: what of those other, bare voices in Rousseau that are outside of the law, excluded from the democratic assembly, and have no voice in modern politics? What of the spontaneous assembly of those other voices who

[703] Ibid., 191.
[704] Ibid., 193.

never agreed to the rules of modern politics in the first place, who were always already contaminating the so-called pure origin of authentic assembly?

VIII: *Polyphōnia* as the Transition from Representation

A polyphonic democracy would make possible new enunciative festivals: new polyphonic assemblies that break free of the *discourse* of the last legislative language: communities that enunciate and pronounce laws that no one else can speak out for them. With each event of polyphony, a singular community chooses to unhinge itself from the discourse of the State and to set up new ways of being political. Community supported agriculture, the reclamation of tax-free church buildings by community organizers or theater groups, local credit unions, and so on. Just as in Plato's *Laws* the word voice was made into a verb (to become vocal), so polyphony can also be a verb. To polyphony. To polyphony here, from this moment forward, from now on.

With every formation of a new polyphony, the discourse of a bygone contract becomes less stable. It is for this reason that we can speak of a democracy as the formation of new collectives that take up democracy now. The invitation to *polyphony* is that possibility to take from the past in order to declare a new future. To say it. To enunciate it. To bring it into being by assembling bare voices. But this is not only an abstract history that Plato recounts for us in the *Laws*, or an undecidability that Rousseau writes into the *Social Contract*. It is an invitation to perform something new today.

In his essay, "The Theater of Cruelty," Derrida comments on Rousseau once more. He comments this time on Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert* in an attempt to describe a new, historical mode of performance that he sees emerging in the work of Artaud.[705] Derrida writes, like Artaud "[Rousseau] proposes the replacement of theatrical representations with public festivals lacking all exhibition and spectacle,

[705] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 245.

festivals without 'anything to see' in which the spectators themselves become actors."[706] Derrida then cites Rousseau's recommendation to d'Alembert in the letter:

> Plant a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the Spectators become an Entertainment unto themselves; make them actors themselves.[707]

Rousseau's famous *Letter to d'Alembert* on the theater proposes public festivals as an alternative to spectacles or spectatorship. It is almost as though in the end Rousseau endorses the *polyphōnia* of Plato's *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics* through festivals at which spectators become actors. For Rousseau, spectatorship amounts to "prisons" or "caves," "silence and inaction."[708] Any city of "ancient liberty" resists these spectacles for "open air" festivals.[709]

Still, Artaud, Derrida maintains, thinks Rousseau's festival further for a new historical era, that is, for a contemporary era that has not yet been born.[710] The performativity that remains to be born is what Derrida and Artaud call a theater of "life itself."[711] As Derrida quotes Artaud, "The theater must make itself the equal of life not an individual life, that individual aspect of life in which CHARACTERS triumph, but the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only a reflection."[712]

This theater at the end of man would be a theater of bare life or bare voice. It would mark the end of representation and the unhinging of performativity from what

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[706] Ibid.

[707] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater*, 344, as quoted by Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 245.

[708] Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater*, 343.

[709] Ibid.

[710] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 232.

[711] Ibid., 234.

[712] Ibid.

Derrida calls the "theological stage" of any authority through *logos*, authorship, or dictation.[713]

It is here that we also find Derrida's critique of the "text," and once more the consideration of the possibility of the bare voice — what Derrida calls a "new language" or a "new sense."[714] Incredibly, Derrida writes, "It is less a question of constructing a mute stage than of constructing a stage whose clamour has not yet been pacified into words."[715] This "new language" or "new sense" would be a historical enunciation from *logos* and from any authority — even "the authority of the text," or an *explication de texte*.[716] The alternative "new language" or "clamour" would be, as with Rousseau, caught up in a contamination at the site of the *archē*.

The "true theater, like poetry," writes Artaud, "is born out of a kind of organized anarchy."[717] It is to enter into a "nontheological space" that is still not yet here[718] — to perform there the erasure of the division between spectator and actor at the limit of representation and at the limit of God.

This new theater would not be consumed by speech or *logos*.[719] It would not be abstract or detached from history, but it would also not be didactic so as to "transmit a content" or "deliver a message" to party followers.[720] Most importantly, it would be a theater in which "[t]here is no longer spectator or spectacle, but *festival*."[721] There is no division between the "representer" and the "represented" in this theater, just like, Derrida adds, in brief moments of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, as well as in the *Letter to M. d'Alembert*.[722] For Derrida, representation is at once theatrical and political: "Within the space of the festival opened up by transgression, the distance of

[713] Ibid., 235.
[714] Ibid., 240.
[715] Ibid.
[716] Ibid., 237.
[717] Ibid., 249.
[718] Ibid., 235.
[719] Ibid., 244.
[720] Ibid., 244, 245.
[721] Ibid., 244.
[722] Ibid., 245.

representation should no longer be extendable."[723] Derrida quotes Artaud, "I must have actors…who on stage are not afraid of the true sensation….of a supposed birth."[724] Derrida adds, "The festival must be a political *act*. And the act of political revolution is *theatrical*."[725]

How could we have fidelity to this revolutionary theatrocracy? Derrida will claim that this theater and fidelity to it is "impossible,"[726] that it "eludes itself in its deferral,"[727] and that is can only be conceived of as a "horizon,"[728] of "a present outside time, a nonpresent."[729] In this sense, the theater of life is much like democracy for Derrida it always remains to be born, it is always something to come. The only possibility is to keep oneself "at the limit of theatrical possibility."[730] This is why, for Artaud, the theater of life "has not yet begun to exist"[731] it is "still to be born," even though the life of it may be affirmed.[732]

But our position in this text is that this democracy and this theater is not always something to come [*à venir*]. It is also something that crops up here and there and then passes away. It is performative and thus transitory. It is always already passing away, fading, which is why its performance is so necessary, and it has never been a matter simply of institutions.

The time of democracy cannot be understood as a direction towards an Aristotelian goal or *telos*. But it must also not be understood as the *à venir* or "to come" of Derrida that is, as a politics that is always deferred and never present and therefore always still *to come*. It is perhaps best to speak of it with Nietzsche's word *heraufkommen* or *coming up*, a coming or arising that is coming up from or out of

[723] Ibid., 244.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Ibid., 245.
[726] Ibid., 247.
[727] Ibid., 250.
[728] Ibid., 248.
[729] Ibid.
[730] Ibid. 249.
[731] Ibid. 232.
[732] Ibid.

[*herauf-*] the conditions of the present world. This particular "coming to," then, is already here and still arriving. Already underway or in process and yet undecided because it is still taking place or rising up in the life of these worlds. It is what Jean-Luc Nancy has recently called the *survenir*, the coming about that is already "in the works…beneath our eyes and in our words"; it "opens less onto a past or future and more onto a present that is never really accomplished in presence."[733]

Democracy, in other words, is always matter of something being performed, of something cropping up here and there in the moments or ruptures of polyphony. How to perform a democracy. This is the hidden question within *polyphōnia*. Democracy arrives as quickly as it departs. "We hereby declare ourselves a community." "We workers declare ourselves to be a democracy, to co-own and co-manage as a collective of equals." "We artists, recognizing the capitalist forces that drive us into servitude, join together with one another with common name and collective art."

As Jean-Luc Nancy writes, "We are still stuttering…we, 'we,' how are we to say we?"[734] In each case, we are making an enunciation an enunciation that unhinges the voice from a discourse that Rousseau calls "the voice of duty." At most times the voice of duty is nothing but the fidelity to a contract that never existed. The initial moment of polyphony is that unhinging of the voice from the voice of duty.

Polyphony is when the bare voices of the political periphery make their contestations known in the public space. It is also a collective enunciation that gives up on a bygone contract so as to affirm a life that is otherwise. This is why it is always bodily or sexual and political at once. As an act of life in the theater, it does this through *poiēsis*, through a creative act or performance.

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[733] Jean-Luc Nancy and Aurélien Barrau, *What's These Worlds Coming To?*, trans. Travis Holloway and Flor Méchain (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 52-3.

[734] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 70.

Of this bare voice, Rousseau will say: "noise alone says nothing to the mind…in every imitation a type of discourse always has to supplement the voice of nature."[735] But this is only because the bare voice is a rupture with a certain mode of imitation; it refuses to maintain hope, to rinse and repeat, to expect that a bygone system of representation and hierarchy will ever amount to democracy.

Polyphony is a rupture with what Rousseau calls "the voice of duty" a voice that is above all in tune with the reason of man and distinct from the irrationality of animals.[736] Rousseau's notion that the general will can only be "enunciated" through an "organ" of "genius" or "sublime reason" such as a legislator or a representative is abandoned in polyphony. It looks instead to a democracy that is cropping up.

IX. 1968

> If throughout the world today all theatrical audacity declares its fidelity to Artaud…then the question of the theater of cruelty, of its present inexistence and its implacable necessity, has the value of a *historic* question.
>
> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*[737]

It is important to remember that Derrida's texts emerged at a very particular *period* in French history. Derrida's writings appear in Paris in the 1960s as there is a renewed interest in a certain kind of democracy that does not look at all like the modern "democratic" State. This distinct shift in political history begins at least as early as 1949 with the critique of authoritarian forms of government and the birth of the so-called "New Left." In journals such as *Socialisme ou barbarie*, for example, the political problem is said to be the same in both liberal Western democracies and in communist states: it is the problem of a modern invention, namely, political representation.

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[735] Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* 323.
[736] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 141.
[737] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 233.

As Castoriadis writes in a founding article on behalf of the journal at this time, "[F]or the first time in history, [the proletariat]…cannot exert its power through 'delegation,' it cannot entrust its power for any lengthy or enduring period of time to its representatives, to its 'State,' or to its 'Party.'"[738] The solution, writes the journal, is to abolish all hierarchical distinctions between the worker and the party, between the citizen and her representative, between the director and the executant.[739] If there is a new motto for the citizen, it is that "no one else can do the job for it."[740] Instead of putting their faith in any kind of leadership, citizens must "abolish all fixed and stable distinctions" and "organize management on a collective basis."[741] And this must be "carried out by the workers themselves."[742]

The hierarchical distinction between the rulers and the ruled must be abolished because of the failure of political representation on all sides. The traditional representatives of the workers in bourgeois states (trade unions and political parties) have become complicit with the state and are increasingly ineffective at helping to bring about a better life for the worker. Meanwhile, in communist states, putting one's trust in a single communist party is no longer an option.

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, for instance, had given way to a new ruling class and with it a "new system of oppression and exploitation" a "cynical" system where the appalling poverty of the working class exists alongside the life of luxury that the 10 to 15 percent who make up the ruling class enjoy. Not only does the dictatorship of the proletariat fail to deliver on the economic equality that it promised; it has led to "the terrorization, the brutalization, and the degradation of man" where "millions of people are held in concentration and forced labor camps" and "where the State police

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[738] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings, Vol. 1, 1946-1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism*, ed., trans. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 104.

[739] Ibid., 102.

[740] Ibid., 103.

[741] Ibid., 102.

[742] Ibid., 103.

(of which the Gestapo was but an imitation) exercises total terror."[743] As Castoriadis puts it in an especially interesting way, "'[P]olitical life' in the soviets was soon reduced to a monologue — or to a series of monologues — by Bolshevik representatives."[744]

New research groups focusing on democracy crop up in Paris at this time, perhaps most notably at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*. The EHESS is host to organizations, research clusters, collectives, and even a press, the *Éditions EHESS*, which publishes key works in this area of thought, such as Nicole Loraux's thesis on democracy and Athenian funeral orations. Not one but several thinkers are part of a broader epistemic shift in thought that includes figures such as Castoriadis' close colleague, Claude Lefort, several cultural anthropologists, such as Jean-Pierre Vernant, and — among others — a young Jacques Derrida. Cultural anthropologists at the EHESS, such as Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and Nicole Loraux, rethink the question of democracy through a study of direct democracy and speech in Athens.

Two other currents of research in Paris at this time were the study of language, inspired by the teachings of Émile Benveniste and Levi-Strauss and others, and also a critique of self and ideology, inspired in part by the return to Marx in the lectures of Althusser and also a rethinking of psychoanalysis in France. Four influential works written throughout the 1960s — Benveniste's *Problems of General Linguistics*, Michel Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*, Lacan's *Ecrits*, and Julia Kristeva's doctoral thesis, *Revolution in Poetic Language* — all discuss language as a critique of the individual self and as a historical, if not unconscious, phenomenon. For Benveniste, Lacan, and Kristeva, the word for this phenomenon in the same: an *enunciation* from out of discourse.[745]

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[743] Ibid., 91-2

[744] Ibid., 96.

[745] See what Benveniste calls an "historical enunciation" in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Tome 1 (1966), 239.

Many attempt to think a new kind of politics alongside the study of language. By the early 1960s, for instance, Castoriadis relates his work on democracy to the study of structuralist and post-structuralist linguistics and psychoanalysis, while Claude Lefort interprets both democracy and totalitarianism on the basis of a structuralist notion he calls the *symbolique dispositif*. In all, this intellectual movement offers ancient alternatives, not solutions, to the modern problems of scale or size, the State, the lack of political participation, economic inequality, and the contemporary loss of political myth.

The signifier "democracy" enters Derrida's thinking precisely at this time. While Derrida does not present himself as a partisan of "life," words like "play," "difference," and "democracy" in his work do not appear in his lexicon through any sort of intellectual heroism on his part. We can see that his words and concepts are part of a broader epistemic shift in thought. In Derrida's collected notes from 1955-60, Derrida studies and comments on Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu.[746] He then lectures on *liberté* in 1962. Still the earliest sustained work relating to democracy appears to be Derrida's 1965 lecture course subtitled "de C. Lévi-Strauss à J. J. Rousseau" in which Derrida reads Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*.

Although Derrida's study of Rousseau is for the most part a study of language and not a study of democracy, his critique of *logos* and speech as a pure form of *archē* could not be more democratic. In addition, his discussion of Rousseau's notion of a democratic assembly gathered through speech becomes a distinct part of this research for Derrida.[747] As we know from his later work on politics, the problem of democracy never went away for Derrida.

* * *

Much of art during this time is responsive or in conversation with the Dadaists

[746] Sources here are the IMEC and UC Irvine's guide to the "Jacques Derrida Papers," available online at: http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/derrida/uci.html

[747] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 134, 137.

and Surrealists before them. Artists create not merely under their own proper names, but often under common names in associations or collectives — even as these common names are (rightly) protested.[748] In France, the Situationists define their work as "the construction of situations"; in America and in Europe, groups such as Fluxus or Happenings concoct instructions for occurrences or operations; in French poetry, members of the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* or *Oulipo* set up rules or games for experimental literature; and meanwhile, the *Nouveaux Realistes* create accumulations or assemblages from everyday life which, either through collage or through the kinetic sculptures of Jean Tinguely, perform something new.

The challenge for many artists is not merely to identify and theorize upon the oppression that a new enemy of equality, capitalism, places upon society; it is to subvert bureaucratic practices through "performance," "play," and "indifference."[749] As the Situationist Raoul Vaneigem writes about it in dramatic terms, our bodies act out certain "roles" everyday — roles that lead to the "impoverishment of life." It is as if, according to Vaneigem, we are actors in the theater of an invisible, stern director who dictates our every gesture and tone. The task of art is not merely to mimic these gestures playfully, but to "break through" or "disrupt" these daily roles so as to momentarily emancipate the body.

The notion of art as the emancipation of "life" appears distinctly among artists throughout various continents. Vaneigem writes that art is a performative "disruption" within each body that occurs simultaneously with others — a "*quasi-biological reaction*

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[748] See, for instance, Dick Higgins' "A Child's History of Fluxus." Higgins discusses two issues in particular regarding the common name: first, a self-appointed leader George Maciunas' attempt to name, define, and even purge certain members from the Fluxus group (recalling the Surrealists' manifesto that purged several of its members); and secondly, the attempt of members in the group to separate themselves from "fake" Fluxus art or those who in his view primarily sought personal fame or academic posts through the common name Fluxus.

[749] Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicolson-Smith, (Rebel Press, 2001), 141.

from the will to live."[750] As Dick Higgins puts it, it is a new "art of life"[751] or as Vaneigem writes in *The Revolution in Everyday Life*, "My only responsibility is to be absolutely honest with those who are on my side, those who are true partisans of authentic life."[752] Or as Artaud had written shortly before them, "The theater must make itself an equal of life not an individual life, that individual aspect of life in which CHARACTERS triumph, but the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only a reflection….I have therefore said 'cruelty' as I might have said 'life.'"[753]

[750] Ibid., *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 131.

[751] In addition to Higgins, see Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 131: "Roles are the bloodsuckers of the will to live. They express lived experience, yet at the same time they reify it. They also offer consolation for this impoverishment of life by supplying a surrogate, neurotic gratification. We have to break free of roles by restoring them to the realm of play."

[752] Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 141.

[753] As quoted by Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 234.

Postscript

Notes for a Future Production of Democracy

On September 30, 2011, during the events of Occupy Wall Street in New York City, I began co-facilitating a series of performance art events that were organized horizontally or democratically through the use of the lot. At the initial reading, dubbed a "Poetry Assembly," there was no headliner, no unifying style, no entrance fee, and it's fair to say no ordinary lyric poetry reading. As the poet and activist Ngoma Hill put it, the first Poetry Assembly was "poetry by the people from the people to the people…in the people's struggle for change."

What occurred looked less like a poetry reading and more like a democratic Athenian assembly. As an art form, the poetry assembly did not simply demand for democracy. It performed it. Its procedures were simple. Each poet from unpublished writers to star bards and even laureates was considered equal to the next. They each placed their name in a lottery and were chosen at random. Secondly, each poet had the prerogative to read before the assembly, and each was given no more than three minutes to read. Finally, there was equal and fair participation by everyone present.

The event was co-facilitated by different attendees of the assembly and lines of poetry were repeated back to the poet using the same call-and-response method utilized regularly at Occupy Wall Street. With every line, a somatic gesture co-authorized the speaker and even confronted the poet with his or her own words. All of this meant there was little separation between the performer and the audience the work of art, at least, depended equally on the actions of both.

Although I initially organized this group through a Facebook page (Poetry@OccupyWallStreet], our online collaboration remained directed at visible

events and tangible resistance in the public space. Poets from around the country began to post their poems online in solidarity, but it was important for each of those poems to be read aloud at Zuccotti Park. One member of the collective began a poetry anthology, but again the group felt it was significant to keep the anthology on-site in the park. Still other members of the collective composed creative slogans for Occupy protests and translated ones from similar movements in Europe. And every Friday night, we would re-assemble in the public space to perform democracy through poetry.

Events like the Poetry Assembly began cropping up in a variety of art forms from music to theater to puppetry and even quilting. Largely organized online through collaborative and "shared" forums, groups turned social media events into collective performances in the public space. One evening a jazz ensemble could be found in the square and the next a group of women knitting scarves for those sleeping outdoors and facing winter. Contemporary artists' guilds were forming fast at Occupy Wall Street. People were finding each other. As an e-mail to me from the Arts and Culture Sub-Committee put it, "We believe we are at the brink of a new art movement, a new school of thought. To catalyze that, we are creating collectives inside our Arts and Culture to advance our movement and society aesthetically towards a new paradigm. We have already a collective on performance art, one is music, and hopefully you will join us with poetry." We joined.

As Thom Donovan, a poet involved with the collective, put it, "What strikes one immediately upon arriving in the park is a participatory atmosphere…and I think something of this spirit resides in the poetry readings that happen every Friday night." Another poet and activist involved with the project, Eliot Katz, offered a more historical perspective, suggesting that poetry at Zuccotti Park "seems a powerful extension of the role that poets have played in recent decades in the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and women's rights movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s; in the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s; and in the more recent movement against the

current war in Iraq."

Despite the rich inheritance from those who came before us, artists involved with Occupy Wall Street continued to speak of a new aesthetic forming at Zuccotti Park. Artists and poets collaborated — something more rare in New York than one might think — on shared, often anonymous work. This work frequently focused on free performances and events in the public space.

For my part, I tried to introduce a democratic genre of lyric poetic performance. A way of doing poetry that had perhaps not been practiced *en masse* since the time of those poetry festivals leading up to the Athenian revolution.

* * *

The poetry assemblies for me were an intervention into the procedures at the Occupy NYC assembly: the poetry assembly was the only action that I know of to make use of the lot — an ancient Athenian practice that solved the problem of scale or large numbers by making sure that anyone at anytime could called on to participate in the assembly.

This experiment with the lot was largely a response to being unable to speak to the assembly on one of the early nights of its formation. I had been asked to read something. I translated Brecht's poem entitled "Understanding" about the people of New York. My spot was given to Cornel West.

But what looked to some as "progressive" or "useful" was for me a terrible foreboding of the problems to come in this "horizontal" assembly. A voice — no matter how resonant — was considered more important than others. How to solve this problem of equal participation became only more difficult as numbers continued to rise. But the place at which this problem was most effectively and creatively dealt with — in my view — was in the Arts and Culture collectives. A new kind of democracy felt natural to artists, and it was being performed by a new kind of art.

II.

One poem always makes me remember this experience fondly. It was written by a gay Greek poet who lost his voice later in life due to an illness. C.F. Cavafy's poem, "The God Abandons Anthony," tells of being caught up by a performance in a city — a performance of voices at limit of God. But notice how this performance is both arriving and departing at the same time. Here's Cavafy:

The God Abandons Anthony

When suddenly, at midnight, you hear
an invisible procession going by
with exquisite music, voices,
don't mourn your luck that's failing now,
work gone wrong, your plans
all proving deceptive — don't mourn them uselessly.
As one long prepared, and graced with courage,
say goodbye to her, the Alexandria that is leaving.
Above all, don't fool yourself, don't say
it was a dream, your ears deceived you:
don't degrade yourself with empty hopes like these.
As one long prepared, and graced with courage,
as is right for you who proved worthy of this kind of city,
go firmly to the window
and listen with deep emotion, but not
with the whining, the pleas of a coward;
listen — your final delectation — to the voices,
to the exquisite music of that strange procession,
and say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing.

Cavafy's title tells us that voices have entered the kind of "nontheological space" of which Derrida and Artaud speak. For whatever reason — problems of religion, politics, or even Cavafy's sexuality — the God is abandoning the city. But this

abandonment is very complicated. It is as much about something arriving as it is about something departing. It is both a greeting and a goodbye. It is a procession passing by.

We are urged with a kind of anticipation to keep watch: to go to the window and listen with deep emotion to what is appearing before us. But what we are welcoming requires us to find a way to say goodbye to a bygone city.

The new procession that we must welcome asks us to say goodbye to the city that we are losing. We are asked not to let our own plans get in the way of something that we have long been prepared for. We are asked "to go firmly to the window" and "listen…to the voices, / to the exquisite music of that strange procession." And just then the city departs and appears "suddenly." It comes and goes like a performance of democracy.

The writings of this book, however, left one of Cavafy's questions unexplored. What is the role of myth for this new politics of democracy? How might the abandoning "god" reappear? How will the community be reassembled after its deconstruction? And what name would we call it? Democracy?

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