

## From *Kottabos* to War in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*

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AT THE CENTER of a much-discussed speech in *Acharnians* (524–29), Aristophanes makes Dicaeopolis present the following aetiology of the Peloponnesian War: certain young Athenians, who were μεθυσκοκότταβοι—drunk from playing *kottabos* at a symposium—went to Megara and stole a whore named Simaitha. Then in turn the Megarians, whom Dicaeopolis describes as πεφουσιγγωμένοι—inflamed like fighting cocks from eating too much garlic—came to Athens and stole two whores from the brothel of Aspasia. So although there had been tit for tat, it was the Athenians who started the war, and somehow it was a game of *kottabos* that provoked them to vent their animal instincts so fatefully.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere Aristophanes treats this game as just one among the many lighthearted diversions that his characters typically enjoy, and thus as quite lacking any menacing aspect. At *Pax* 339–45, Trygaeus tries to restrain the Chorus by reminding them of the pleasures that a little more patience will soon bring them:

ἀλλ' ὅταν λάβωμεν αὐτήν, τηνικαῦτα χαίρετε  
καὶ βοᾶτε καὶ γελάτ' ἤ-  
δη γὰρ ἐξέσται τόθ' ὑμῖν  
πλεῖν μένειν βινεῖν καθεύδειν,  
ἐς πανηγύρεις θεωρεῖν,  
ἐστιᾶσθαι κοτταβίζειν,

<sup>1</sup> For Aristophanes' literary debts in this passage see J. van Leeuwen, ed., *Aristophanis Acharnenses cum prolegomenis et commentariis* (Leiden 1968) *ad loc.*; D. M. MacDowell, "The Nature of Aristophanes' *Akharaians*," *G&R* 30 (1983) 143–62, esp. 149ff, with earlier bibliography.

†συβαρίζειν†  
 ἰοῦ ἰοῦ κεκραγέναί.<sup>2</sup>

Later in the same play (1242–45), Trygaeus suggests that the Arms Dealer's war trumpet would make ideal furniture for the symposium:

μόλυβδον ἐς τουτὶ τὸ κοῖλον ἐγγέας  
 ἔπειτ' ἄνωθεν ῥάβδον ἐνθεῖς ὑπόμακρον,  
 γενήσεταιί σοι τῶν κατακτῶν κοττάβων.<sup>3</sup>

And finally, at *Nub.* 1071–74, when Wrong Argument tries to seduce Pheidippides, his list of enticements resembles that of Trygaeus to the Chorus in *Pax*:

σκέψαι γὰρ ὦ μειράκιον ἐν τῷ σωφρονεῖν ἅπαντα  
 ἄνεστιν, ἡδονῶν θ' ὄσων μέλλεις ἀποστερεῖσθαι,  
 παίδων γυναικῶν κοττάβων ὄψων πότων κιχλισμῶν.  
 καίτοι τί σοι ζῆν ἄξιον, τούτων ἐὰν στερηθῆς;<sup>4</sup>

At least one of Aristophanes' contemporaries among the comic poets also used the motif as an evocative foil.<sup>5</sup> A speaker in Hermippus' *Moirai* warns about the discomforts of war:

χλανίδες δ' οὐλαι καταβέβληνται,  
 θώρακα δ' ἅπας ἐμπερονᾶται,  
 κνημῖς δὲ περὶ σφυρὸν ἀρθροῦται,  
 βλαύτης δ' οὐδεὶς ἔτ' ἔρωσ λευκῆς,

<sup>2</sup> “Once we’ve got Peace back, *then* dance and shout and laugh; *then* you’ll be able to travel, rest, screw, sleep, attend the festivals, go to banquets, *play kottabos*, become a Sybarite!”

<sup>3</sup> “Pour some lead into the mouth, then put a fairly long shaft on top, and you’ll have a *kottabos*-stand!”

<sup>4</sup> “Consider, boy, all that moderation entails, and all the pleasures you’re about to lose: boys, women, *kottabos* games, eating, drinking laughter. Would your life really be worth living, if you were deprived of all that?”

A similar contrast between a life of strict rectitude and a life of fun and *kottabos* games might lurk behind the fragment from Aristophanes’ *Daitaleis* preserved at Ath. 667E (=K.-A., PCG III.2 fr.231).

<sup>5</sup> For fragments from Ameipsias’ *Apokottabizontes* see K.-A. II 198ff. Cratinus’ *Nemesis* both lampooned Aspasia and contained a reference to *kottabos*; cf. K.-A. IV 184f fr.124.

ῥάβδον δ' ὄψει τὴν κοτταβικὴν  
 ἐν τοῖς ἀχύροισι κυλινδομένην,  
 μάνης δ' οὐδὲν λατάγων αἰεὶ·  
 τὴν δὲ τάλαιναν πλάστιγγ' ἂν ἴδοις  
 παρὰ τὸν στροφέα τῆς κηπαίας  
 ἐν τοῖσι κορήμασιν οὔσαν.<sup>6</sup>

In the plays of Aristophanes and others, then, the games of *kottabos* normally figure among the delights of a life free from war and other afflictions. And yet, in the lament of Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians*, a contradiction with the standard practice arises, for playing *kottabos* soon leads to an egregious act of cross-border *hybris* and puts an end to the peace. In this instance, according to Dicaeopolis, playing *kottabos* served as the Athenian equivalent of eating garlic. To put the problem another way, Aristophanes did not merely describe his imaginary Athenian warmongers as garden-variety drunks; for their particular kind of intoxication the poet felt inspired to produce a neologism, *methysokottaboi*. Surely we need to weigh both halves of this compound, along with its context, in order to understand all that Dicaeopolis implies about the origins of the war.

What the symposiasts in Aristophanes went to Megara for in the first place was sex, and the fighting followed on that. Evidently their *kottabos* game had excited them. As the iconography of vases and literary testimonia overwhelmingly attest, the game was regarded as highly erotic. The first clue lies in the poets' frequent use of such epithets as "Cyprian" or "Aphrodisiac" in reference to the wine dregs that flew through the air during games of *kottabos* (Ath. 668B). Part of the reason for

<sup>6</sup> Ath. 668A (=K.-A. V fr.48): "The woolly cloaks are set aside, and every man fastens on his breastplate; the greave is fitted to the shin, and no one cares any longer about the white slipper. And you'll see the shaft of the *kottabos*-stand languish in the chaff, the *manes* pays no heed to the wine dregs; you'd see the pathetic *plastinx* in the sweepings by the socket of the garden gate."

On the terminology of *kottabos* cf. K. Schneider, "Kottabos," *RE* 11 (1922) 1528–41; see also B. A. Sparkes, "Kottabos: An Athenian After-Dinner Game," *Archaeology* 13 (1960) 202–07, who argues that the *plastinx* was a small plate balanced as a target atop the stand, while the *manes* was a large plate visible halfway up the stand on many representations—and not, as sometimes thought, a terra-cotta figurine balanced on top. Sparkes also briefly discusses the erotic aspects of Aristophanes' allusion to *kottabos* at *Ach.* 524–29.

these epithets was the practice of claiming sexual favors as the immediate reward for a successful cast. Thus a fragment from Sophocles' *Salmones* (a satyr-play) runs:

τάδ' ἐστὶ κνισμὸς καὶ φιλημάτων ψόφος·  
τῷ καλλικοσσαβοῦντι νικητήρια  
τίθῃμι καὶ βαλόντι χάλκειον κάρα.<sup>7</sup>

In *Zeus Kakoumenos* by Plato Comicus, Heracles proposes kisses as the prize for the game, but the practical-minded brothel keeper with whom he is about to play refuses, and counters with the proposal that they play for boots and a cup. Heracles dimwittedly replies:

βαβαιάξ· οὔτοσὶ  
μείζων ἀγὼν τῆς Ἴσθμιάδος ἐπέρχεται.<sup>8</sup>

Several testimonia also suggest that the wine dregs used for *kottabos* became known as “Aphrodisiac” because the game served a predictive function: a successful cast signalled success in love.<sup>9</sup> Finally, players frequently dedicated their throws to their anticipated lovers. According to Theophrastus (Περὶ μέθης, Ath. 427D; cf. 668B), ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τὸ μὲν σπένδειν ἀποδομένον τοῖς θεοῖς ὁ δὲ κότταβος τοῖς ἐρωμένοις.<sup>10</sup>

*Kottabos* was most often the province of the male symposiasts, but many sources represent women participating as well. Verses from the *Erotika* of Bacchylides read:

<sup>7</sup> “Here is tickling and the peck of kisses: I establish these as prizes of victory for the man who casts the *kottabos* most pleasingly and strikes the bronze head.” Radt, *TrGF* IV 412 fr.537 (=Ath. 487D).

<sup>8</sup> K.-A. fr.46.9f (=Ath. 666D): “*Babaiax!* Here’s a bigger *agon* than the Isthmian Games coming at me!” According to Ath. 667D, eggs, small cakes (*pemmatia*), and dried fruit (*tragemata*) were also common prizes.

<sup>9</sup> For relevant testimonia see E. Csapo and M. Miller, “The ‘Kottabos-Toast’ and an Inscribed Red-Figured Cup,” *Hesperia* 60 (1991) 379 n.57, who follow P. Mingazzini, “Sulla pretesa funzione oracolare del *kottabos*,” *AA* 65–66 (1950–51) 35–47, in minimizing the importance of these testimonia.

<sup>10</sup> “In the old days libations were reserved for the gods, while *kottabos* was reserved for the beloved.”

..... εὔτε  
 τὴν ἀπ' ἀγκύλης ἴησι τοῖσδε νεανίαις  
 λευκὸν ἀντεῖνασα πῆχυν.<sup>11</sup>

A fragment from Cratinus is quite similar but, commensurate with its shift in genre, more direct:

ἀλλ' ἴσον ἴσω μάλιστ' ἀκράτου δύο χόας  
 πινοῦσ' ἀπ' ἀγκύλης ἐπονομάζουσά  
 ἴησι λάταγας τῶ Κορινθίῳ πέει.<sup>12</sup>

In both cases the *hetairai* aim their drops of wine directly at the men reclining on the couches around them, rather than at the usual inanimate targets. As a concession from the men in charge—one which we may consider less than breathtaking—*hetairai* were evidently sometimes granted the freedom to choose their partners. Several vases support this interpretation, as for example a well-known hydria painted by Phintias (PLATE 1a).<sup>13</sup> The inscription on the vase has generally been understood as an utterance by *one* of the women, and has usually been translated: “[I toss] this one for you, Euthymides” (τοὶ τὴνδὶ Εὐθυμίδῃ [λατάσσω]). Euthymides is also the name of one of the youths in the main panel of this vase. Recently it has been proposed that the initial TOI should be understood as an interrogative pronoun, with the result that here and on a few related vases an exchange of question-and-answer is involved with *two* speakers: “For whom do I toss this one?” “For Euthymides.”<sup>14</sup> In any case, despite the skepticism of some scholars, I conclude that Phintias and other painters did not depict such scenes of *kottabos*-playing females only as a male fantasy or an absurd joke. Given the literary evidence, in combination with the

<sup>11</sup> “Raising her white arm, from a bent wrist she cast at the young men.” H. Maehler, *Bacchylidis carmina cum fragmentis* (Leipzig 1970) 91 fr.17 (=Ath. 782E). The phrase ἀπ' ἀγκύλης, which I translate here and in the next example with “from a bent wrist,” became formulaic for the required posture.

<sup>12</sup> K.-A. fr.299 (=Ath. 782D-E): “After drinking two pitchers of strong wine mixed half and half, from a bent wrist she cast her wine dregs at the Corinthian prick, calling out the man’s name as she did so.”

<sup>13</sup> ARV<sup>2</sup> 23.7 (hydria by Phintias); cf., e.g., CVA 6, 1984 Suisse, Taf. 28f (kylix by the Tarquinia Painter), ARV<sup>2</sup> 16.15 (psykter by Euphronios), ARV<sup>2</sup> 455.3 (kylix in the Thorvaldsen Group), Collection Marcel Ebnöther, Les Arcs (woman’s head kantharos in the manner of Douris).

<sup>14</sup> Csapo and Miller (*supra* n.9) 367–82 with pls. 97–100.

substantial number of images painted by different artists of different periods, there seems little reason to doubt that *hetairai* could sometimes play.<sup>15</sup>

So much for the erotic dimension of *kottabos*; it should now be clear why the Athenians went to Megara in a state of sexual excitement. The second essential characteristic of these *methy-sokottaboi* in *Acharnians* was their aggressiveness. This too had undoubtedly been aggravated by the peculiar kind of exercise in which they had just been engaged. Further consideration of the testimonia confirms that *kottabos* partly appealed to the Greeks as an *agon* that mimicked more hazardous forms of competition. Ancient authors consistently applied the vocabulary of javelin-throwing, discus, or archery to this indoor contest, especially the verbs βάλλειν and ἰέναι and their cognates.<sup>16</sup> Typically suggestive language occurs in a couplet composed by Critias (fr. 2 D.-K.=Ath. 666B):

κότταβος ἐκ Σικελῆς ἐστὶ χθονός, ἐκπρεπὲς ἔργον,  
ὄν σκοπὸν ἐς λατάγων τόξα καθιστάμεθα.<sup>17</sup>

It is well known that Greek men spent long hours honing their athletic and martial skills in conspicuous displays of male beauty and prowess. It is no less certain that *kottabos* became the focus of much practice and narcissistic preening as well. The diction of Sophocles, notably his compound participle καλλικοτταβοῦντι, points in this direction. Athenaeus alludes to the desired quality of gracefulness with the adverbs καλῶς, εὐρυθμῶς, and εὐσχημονῶς.<sup>18</sup> A passage from Dicaearchus begins with a straightforward enough description of the national obsession but ends with an intriguing trace of censure:

For [the symposiasts] tried very hard not only to hit the target, but also to perform each part of the game beautifully (καλῶς). One had to recline on his left elbow and make a supple arc (κυκλώσαντα ὕγρωσ) with his

<sup>15</sup> *Contra*, E. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus* (New York 1985) 160 with fig. 134; see also Csapo and Miller (*supra* n.9) 380.

<sup>16</sup> For an exhaustive treatment of this shared vocabulary see E. K. Borthwick, "The Gymnasium of Bromius," *JHS* 84 (1964) 49–53.

<sup>17</sup> "The *kottabos* comes from the land of Sicily—a remarkable creation that we set up as a target for shooting wine dregs."

<sup>18</sup> Ath. 782E, 666B; cf. Plato Com. K.-A. fr.47.

right arm to throw the *latax*; for that is what they called the liquid that fell from the kylix. Thus some people took more pride in playing *kottabos* well than others took in their ability to hurl the javelin.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, in one striking anecdote, the game of *kottabos* functions as a direct metaphor for the greater contest of war. At *Rh.* 1373a, after he has explained the frame of mind of the wrongdoer, Aristotle catalogues the sorts of people who are liable to suffer wrong. Within this list he includes

those who are going to be attacked by others, if we do not attack them first, since in such cases it is no longer possible to deliberate; thus Aenesidemus is said to have sent the prize in a game of *kottabos* to Gelon when the latter had reduced a town to slavery, because Gelon had anticipated him in something he was on the verge of doing himself.

On this passage the translator of the Loeb edition succinctly notes that Aenesidemus sent Gelon the *kottabos* prize “as a compliment for having ‘played the game’ so skillfully.”<sup>20</sup> I would add that Aenesidemus was moved to pay his witty compliment to Gelon by the specific resemblance of war and *kottabos* as competitions for some object of desire.

The agonistic character of *kottabos* corresponds closely with other institutional attributes of the symposium. In his protracted *Quaestiones conviviales*, Plutarch passes over wine-tossing in silence; no doubt he—in company with most other Greek intellectuals—despised this pastime as altogether unseemly and coarsening.<sup>21</sup> He does provide, however, much helpful detail about what he calls “challenges” (*prostagmata*). Any guest might issue a challenge, whether it involved answering riddles, singing the familiar *skolia* or other songs, or performing more physical

<sup>19</sup> F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, I: *Dikaiarchos* (Basel 1944) 33 fr.97 (=Ath. 479D).

<sup>20</sup> J. H. Freeze, *Aristotle, The “Art” of Rhetoric* (London 1926) 137 ad 1373a.

<sup>21</sup> Sober-minded Greek intellectuals had little patience with *kottabos*, ubiquitous though it clearly was in popular culture: a lexical search in the TLG reveals that—except for the one anecdote in Aristotle (quoted above) and the whiff of condemnation in Dicaearchus (cited above)—it receives no mention in Plutarch, Plato, Thucydides, Xenophon, or even (surprisingly) Herodotus.

feats.<sup>22</sup> The most renowned example, of course, occurs near the beginning of Plato's *Symposium*, when Eryximachus proposes a round of speeches on the nature of Love. Naturally the challenger could be expected to play to his own strengths, but this practice sometimes degenerated into outright cruelty. Therefore Plutarch, who thinks the chief aim of the symposiarch should be to preserve an atmosphere of cheerfulness (*euphrosyne*), warns against the bad feelings liable to be provoked when someone "orders stammerers to sing, or bald men to comb their hair, or the lame to dance on a greased wine skin."<sup>23</sup> Just like other symposiastic *prostagmata*, *kottabos* too sometimes generated notorious acts of insolence, at least if we are prepared to accept certain fragments from Attic satyr-plays as oblique reflections of actual circumstances. Thus a former symposiast in the *Oeneus* remembers how

πυκνοῖς δ' ἔβαλλον Βακχίου τοξεύμασιν  
 κάρα γέροντος· τὸν βαλόντα δὲ στέφειν  
 ἐγὼ 'τετάμην, ἄθλα κοττάβων διδούς.<sup>24</sup>

A second satyr-play, the *Bone-Gatherers* (Ὄστολόγοι) of Aeschylus, seems to have featured Eurymachus committing the same indignity in another context; but the text remains uncertain

<sup>22</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 621E–22A. The challenges resemble the competitions that occurred at legendary and historical betrothal ceremonies, e.g. the contest of the bow in the *Odyssey*, or the lengthy contests to which, according to Herodotus (6.126–30), Cleisthenes of Sicyon subjected the suitors of his daughter. Cf. N. Robertson, "The Betrothal Symposium in Early Greece," in W. J. Slater, ed., *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991: hereafter 'DCC') 25–28. W. Burkert offers the challenge at the marriage feast of Samson in Judges as an oriental parallel for this Greek tradition: "Oriental Symposia: Contrasts and Parallels," *DCC* 7–24.

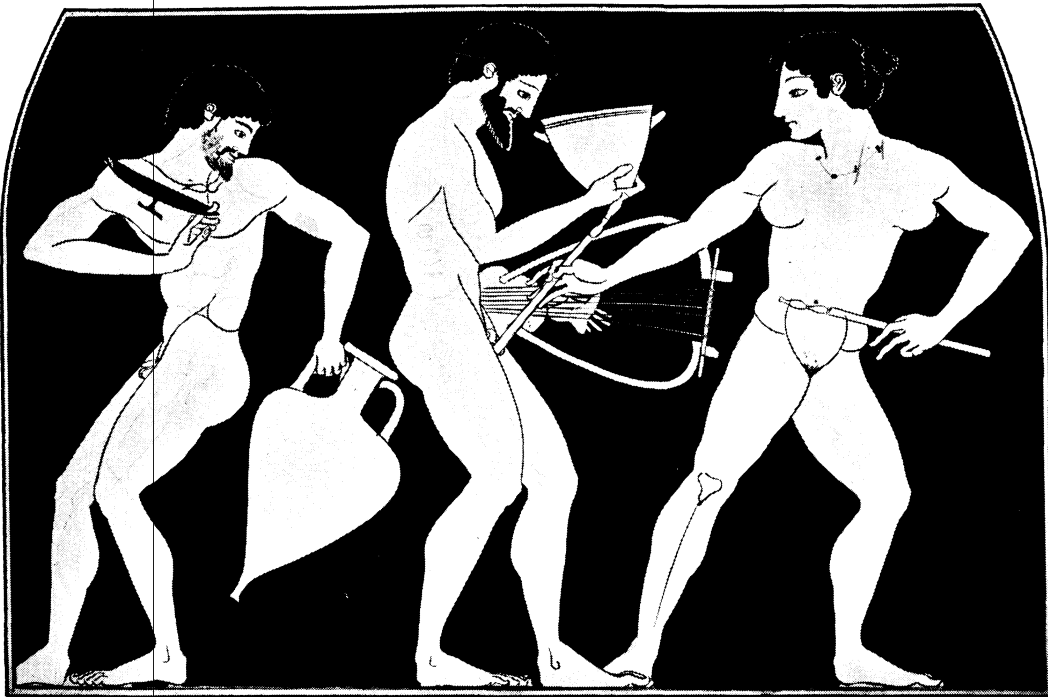
<sup>23</sup> Plutarch also (*Mor.* 621F–622A) provides heartwarming anecdotes that show how the victims of such pranks occasionally turned the tables on their tormentors, e.g. the man with the atrophied foot who challenged his fellow symposiasts to insert a leg into a narrow-necked amphora. There is a perfect analogy in the first book I can remember reading, *Wacky the Small Boy*, in which Wacky foils the big boys in a game of follow-the-leader by walking erect under a low tree limb.

<sup>24</sup> "With frequent arrows of Bacchus they aimed at the old man's head. I myself had been appointed to crown the one who hit him, by awarding him the prizes of the *kottabos* game." Despite attribution to Euripides at Ath. 666c, the *Oeneus* may be Sophoclean; cf. the comments of D. L. Page, in the Loeb *Select Papyri* III (London 1941) 158f.





(a)



(b)

(a) Hydria by Phintias (detail; ARV<sup>2</sup> 23,7)  
(b) Type A amphora by the Kleophrades Painter (detail; ARV<sup>2</sup> 181,1; both after J. C. Hoppin, *Euthymides and His Fellows*, pls. XII and XXVIII)

(*cf.* Borthwick [*supra* n.16] 52; Radt, *TrGF* III fr.179). In the realm of iconography, we might compare the scene on an amphora by the Kleophrades Painter (PLATE 1b): here the musician in the center has his genitals prodded by the flute-wielding *hetaira* on the right at the same time as he is kottabized by the younger symposiast on the left, who incidentally uses the standard throw (ἀπ' ἀγκύλης).<sup>25</sup> All such incidents fit squarely into Plutarch's admonitory category of the symposium gone awry.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Theophrastus was not far off when he maintained that the Greeks wasted most of their wine playing *kottabos* (Ath. 782B).

Another of Plutarch's views on symposiastic *eutaxia* also advances our understanding of the social function of *kottabos*. He argues repeatedly (*Mor.* 621D, 614A, 620D) that the symposiarch ought to sponsor a mixture of serious and playful events suited to the individual characters of the particular men in attendance. His reasoning is that the more frivolous symposiasts need to be improved by the occasion, while the over-serious participants need opportunities to shrug off the weight of the world for a time. Though Plutarch casts this notion in prescriptive terms, it must also be descriptive of actual practices. That is, the therapeutic and psychagogic effects of the symposium must have had a great deal to do with the lasting appeal of this institution. Even if Plutarch's silence means that he considered *kottabos* too ridiculous to be worthy of inclusion in any respectable symposium, evidently many people did not follow him in this bit of intellectual snobbery. Rather, between the sixth and fourth centuries, the ancients in general found *kottabos* immensely diverting.

Plutarch's insistence on the necessity of combining the elements of the symposium in such a way as to improve the souls of the participants derives in part from Plato, who argued in the first two books of the *Laws* for a specific kind of synthesis constructed from the Athenian symposium and the Dorian *syssition*. It is interesting to note that *kottabos*, a game that had a widely acknowledged Dorian pedigree and that readily gave rise to athletic and military metaphors, also became ubiquitous at Athenian symposia. At least in this respect, the

<sup>25</sup> ARV<sup>2</sup> 181.1 (type A amphora by the Kleophrades Painter).

<sup>26</sup> On the failed symposium as a historiographic motif *cf.* G. Paul, "Symposia and Deipna in Plutarch's Lives and Other Historical Writings," *DCC* 157-70.

fusion of disparate ethnic traditions that Plato recommended in the *Laws* had actually been initiated long before; but on the other hand there can be no doubt that Plato would have excluded *kottabos* from his reorganization of the symposium, especially considering the *hybris* that the game all too readily inspired.<sup>27</sup>

The ancient insight that the symposium holds the key to the organization of Greek society continues to resonate strongly in modern scholarship.<sup>28</sup> Oswyn Murray, for example, has investigated the symposium as a means of developing and maintaining cohesion within an elite group of warriors. Drinking customs receive particular emphasis in his studies, as in the following passage:

Loyalties that unite and preserve the group in moments of danger are created and maintained by the activities of the group at play.... Ritualized consumption in the form of alcohol actually promotes the virtues required on the battlefield, without the dangers (or the expense) of realistic military maneuvers.<sup>29</sup>

Though Murray's hypothesis may seem a bit risky as a strategy for military preparedness, it corresponds to the equally paradoxical boast of Pericles in the Funeral Oration (Thuc. 2.39.1): "In regard to education, whereas our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live in a milder way, and yet are just as ready to encounter every hazard." A recreation such as *kottabos* that reminded men, however dimly, of archery and javelin-throwing fits perfectly into this miraculously painless regime.

<sup>27</sup> On the artificiality of the antithesis that Plato establishes between Athenian and Spartan customs, cf. O. Murray, "War and the Symposium," in *DCC* 90ff.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. most recently N. R. E. Fisher, "Drink, *Hybris* and the Promotion of Harmony at Sparta," in A. Powell, ed., *Classical Sparta. Techniques Behind Her Success* (Norman 1989) 26–50; *DCC*; O. Murray, ed., *Sympotica. A Symposium on the Symposium* (Oxford 1990); D. Levine, "Symposium and the Polis," in T. J. Figueira and G. Nagy, edd., *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis* (Baltimore 1985) 176–96.

<sup>29</sup> Murray (*supra* n.27 86f; see also his "The Symposium as Social Organization," in R. Hägg, ed., *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.* (Stockholm 1983) 195–99.

As we have seen, the diverse testimonia that preserve our awareness of *kottabos* generally accentuate the erotic, athletic, and martial associations of the sport. I have tried to suggest how such aspects of *kottabos* correspond to certain ancient and modern views, both on the social function of the symposium and on the larger patterns of classical culture. Finally, however whimsical the aetiology of the Peloponnesian War propounded by Dicaeopolis may seem, it is evident that Aristophanes did not coin his new word *methysokottaboi* arbitrarily, but rather with a hint of didactic purpose. The widely-acknowledged erotic and competitive dimensions of *kottabos* would have made the impetuous abduction of a prostitute by young warriors, after their symposium had gotten out of hand, perfectly intelligible for a fifth-century audience, both in itself and as a metaphor for the recent history of a predatory Athens. And although elsewhere Aristophanes chose not to portray *kottabos* as in any way perilous, it perfectly suited his purposes to do so in the *Acharnians*, a “wine-song” (*trygoidia*, 500) in which the chorus, by the time of the second parabasis (971–99), has been persuaded to exclude the “obnoxiously drunk” (*paroinikos*) Polemos from the symposium, in which a vine stake ultimately wounds the general Lamachus, and in which wine and the accoutrements of drinking finally come to symbolize the victories of the playwright and his protagonist, whose struggles for peace had initially seemed so unpatriotic.<sup>30</sup> Hence Aristophanes’ playful evocation of the intriguing cultural phenomenon of *kottabos* as a symbolic ‘cause’ of a devastating war must be seen as one small element of that larger Aristophanic mission of political enlightenment that the chorus in the parabasis of the *Acharnians* (658) describes as οὐδὲ πανουργῶν οὐδὲ κατάρδων ἀλλὰ τὰ βέλτιστα διδάσκων.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> On the wounding of Lamachus and its correspondence to Dionysus’ punishment of Telephus see H. P. Foley, “Tragedy and Politics in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” *JHS* 108 (1988) 33–47, esp. 39 with n.24; on the renunciation of Polemos see T. K. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy* (Ithaca 1991) 56ff.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. MacDowell (*supra* n.1) 148: “It is generally agreed that, if Aristophanes is making serious points about the war anywhere in this play, he is doing so in this place” (*i.e.*, in the speech of Dicaeopolis at 497–556). My thanks to Dana Burgess, Jane Phillips, and Cathy Scaife for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Errors that remain are of course my own.