

Sport and Democracy in Classical Athens*

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the neglected problem of elite sport in classical Athens. Democracy may have opened up politics to every citizen, but it had no impact on sporting participation. Athenian sportsmen continued to be drawn from the elite. Thus it comes as a surprise that non-elite citizens judged sport to be a very good thing and created an unrivalled program of local sporting festivals on which they spent a staggering sum. They also shielded sportsmen from the public criticism that was otherwise normally directed towards the elite and its exclusive pastimes. The work of social scientists suggests that the explanation of this problem can be found in the close relationship that non-elite Athenians perceived between sporting contests and their own waging of war. The article's conclusion is that it was the democracy's opening up of war to non-elite citizens that legitimised elite sport.

INTRODUCTION

Athenian democracy may have opened up politics to every citizen but it had little impact on sporting participation. For almost the entire classical period athletics continued to be an exclusive pastime of the upper class. Consequently, it is a paradox that sport was still highly valued and supported by the lower class. In fact, the Athenian *dēmos* ('people') judged athletics to be a good thing. The political power that they had allowed them to turn this high evaluation into pro-sport policies. Therefore, in their democracy's first fifty years they created an unrivalled program of local sporting festivals, on which they spent a great deal of money. They carefully managed sporting infrastructure and protected athletics from the public criticism that was normally directed at the upper class and its exclusive pastimes. Social-science research suggests that the cultural overlap between sport and war could account for this paradox. The classical Athenians conceived of games and battles in identical terms: they were *agōnes* ('contests') that involved

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ponoi ('toils') and *kindunoi* ('dangers'). For them victory in both *agōn*-types depended on the *aretē* ('courage') of competitors.

In the sixth century, before Athenian democracy, war was largely an elite pursuit, but, in the next century, it underwent a profound democratisation. This ensured that the cultural overlap between sport and war had a double impact on the standing of athletics. With the creation of a public army of hoplites and a large public fleet, military service was extended to every social stratum. Under Athenian democracy it was how audiences of non-elite citizens responded that determined the outcomes not only of public debates but also of dramatic competitions. Consequently, speakers and playwrights were under great pressure to represent the new experiences of non-elite hoplites and sailors in terms of the traditional moral explanation of victory in sport and war. The first effect of this democratisation was that lower-class citizens closely associated upper-class sport with the mainstream and the highly valued public activity of war. The second effect was that the *dēmos* now had personal experience of something that was akin to athletics. The result was that they could more easily empathise with what athletes actually did. Together these two effects fully account for the paradox of elite sport under Athenian democracy.

In the classical period's last decade the Athenian *dēmos* belatedly took steps to open up sporting participation. In the mid-330s they created a two-year training program for future hoplites. By covering living expenses and the wages of teachers, they succeeded in recruiting large numbers of lower-class Athenians. In the first year of this *ephēbeia* ('cadetship') each tribe's epebes competed as torch racers and attended the classes of an athletics teacher. The *dēmos* got them to do this, because it would, they believed, better socialise them into the values of war. What made it possible for them to take these steps was the close connection that they already perceived between sport and war. But in the decade that remained of the classical period the *ephēbeia* had little impact on the background of those who competed as athletes. As the Athenians only became epebes when they turned eighteen, families who wanted their boys to be athletes still had to pay for private sports classes. Lower-class epebes would also have been reluctant to enter other athletic *agōnes*, as they knew that they would be competing against men who had trained and competed as athletes throughout their boyhoods.

2. THE SPORTING PASSIONS OF THE ATHENIAN PEOPLE

The Athenian *dēmos* lavished a lot of time and money on sporting contests. They regularly staged *polis*-sponsored festivals and public sacrifices throughout the year (e.g. Isae. 9.21; Isoc. 7.29; Lys. 30.19-20). With some justification they believed that they had more of them than any other Greek state (e.g. Isoc. 4.45; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 3.2; cf. Ar. *Nub.* 307-10). Most of their competitive festivals were established in the first fifty years of

their democracy.¹ Athletics featured in two thirds of the fifteen competitive festivals that the Athenian *polis* ('city-state') managed.² It did so much more often than the other types of *agōnes*. Therefore the popularity of athletics paralleled the flourishing of Athenian democracy.³ The most extensive program of contests was staged at the Great Panathenaea.⁴ This was the large-scale version, held every four years, of Athens's annual festival for its patron goddess. It celebrated the Gigantomachy and Athena's prominent role in this military victory of the Olympians over the Giants (e.g. Arist. fr. 637 Rose).⁵ In the 380s the four-yearly festival had *agōnes* for individuals in 27 athletic, equestrian and musical events (*IG* ii² 2311).⁶ In addition, contests for groups were staged for pyrrhic and dithyrambic choruses, and for tribal teams of torch racers, sailors and manly young men. These events were more numerous than those of the ancient Olympics.⁷ Eight other Athenian festivals had sporting contests.⁸ The annual games for the war dead, the Eleusinia, which was staged in three out of four years, and the four-yearly festival of Heracles at Marathon each had a large set of athletic, equestrian and musical events.⁹ Five other annual festivals also featured a single athletic or equestrian contest.¹⁰

The *dēmos* made upper-class citizens pay for a large part of the fixed-operating costs of these festivals (e.g. Xen. *Oec.* 2.6). The *lampadēphoroi* ('torch racers') of the Great Panathenaea, Hephaestea and Prometheia competed and trained as part of teams which had been drawn from the Cleisthenic tribes. The cost of training each of these ten teams fell to an upper-class citizen serving as a *gumnasiarkhos* or athletic-training-sponsor (e.g. Xen. *Vect.* 4.51-2). A *khoregos* ('chorus-sponsor') did the same

¹ R.G. Osborne, 'Competitive Festivals and the Polis: A Context for the Dramatic Festivals at Athens', in A.H. Sommerstein et al. (eds), *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis: Papers from the Greek Drama Conference Nottingham 18-20 July 1990* (Bari 1993) 21-38, especially 27-8.

² Osborne (n. 1) 38.

³ S.G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (London and New Haven 2004) 233.

⁴ D.G. Kyle, 'Sport, Society and Politics in Athens', in D.G. Kyle and P. Christesen (eds), *Sport and Spectacle in the Greek and Roman World* (Chichester 2014) 159-75, at 160-5.

⁵ J.L. Shear, 'Polis and Panathenaea: The History and Development of Athena's Festival', PhD thesis (University of Pennsylvania [Philadelphia] 2001) 29-38.

⁶ With J.L. Shear, 'Prizes from Athens: The List of Panathenaea Prizes and the Sacred Oil', *ZPE* 142 (2003) 87-105.

⁷ Miller (n. 3) 113-29. For the Great Panathenaea's duration see e.g. Shear (n. 5) 382-4.

⁸ Kyle (n. 4) 165-6.

⁹ For the games of the war dead see e.g. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 58.1; Dem. 60.1; Lys. 2.80; D.G. Kyle, *Athletics in Ancient Athens* (Leiden 1987) 44-5; For the Eleusinia see e.g. *IG* i³ 988; ii² 1672.258-61; Kyle (n. 9) 47. For Heracles's festival see e.g. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 54.7; Dem. 19.125; *IG* i³ 3; Kyle (n. 9) 46-7.

¹⁰ D.M. Pritchard, *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 2013) 95-6.

for each of the choruses that competed in Athens's dramatic and dithyrambic contests (e.g. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 56.2-3).¹¹ During the 350s these festival liturgies added up to 97 annually, rising to 118 in the years of the Great Panathenaea.¹²

In antiquity the complaint was occasionally made that the Athenians actually spent more on staging festivals than on fighting wars (e.g. Dem. 4.35-7; Plut. *Mor.* 349a). Since the early nineteenth century some scholars have viewed this ancient complaint as fully justified.¹³ Athenian democracy undeniably did spend a large amount of money on festivals. But careful comparison of its actual spending on them and on its armed forces shows this complaint to be an exaggeration. What the Athenians spent on wars manifestly always dwarfed all other public spending combined.¹⁴ In the 420s public spending alone on the armed forces was, on average, 1500 talents ('t.') per year.¹⁵ In the 370s the average annual total of all spending on war was 500 talents.¹⁶ In spite of this, the Athenians still placed a high priority on generously funding their festivals. They spent 25 talents on each celebration of the Great Panathenaea.¹⁷ The entire program of state-administered festivals probably consumed no less than 100 t. each year.¹⁸ This was a lot of money: it was comparable to the fixed-operating costs of the government of fourth-century Athens.¹⁹ Therefore, the Athenian *dēmos* may have treated war-making as their top public priority, but they still spent a truly staggering sum on their festivals.

Athenian democracy also prioritised public infrastructure for athletic education.²⁰ Politicians clearly got ahead in their *agōnes* for pre-eminence with each other by taking care of the states three *gymnasia* or publicly owned athletics fields.²¹ For example, in the fifth century Cimon spent his own money on providing proper running tracks and landscaping for the Academy (Plut. *Cim.* 13.7). Pericles used public funds to renovate the Lyceum (Harp. s.v. 'Lyceum'). Alcibiades proposed a law concerning Cynosarges (Ath. 234e; *IG* i³ 134). In the fourth century Lycurgus oversaw

¹¹ D.M. Pritchard, 'Kleisthenes, Participation and the Dithyrambic Contests of Late Archaic and Classical Athens', *Phoenix* 58 (2004) 208-28.

¹² J.K. Davies, 'Demosthenes on Liturgies: A Note', *JHS* 87 (1967) 33-40, esp. 40.

¹³ E.g. A. Böckh, *The Public Economy of Athens*, tr. George Cornewall Lewis, 1st English edn (London 1828) vol. 1, 280, 360-1.

¹⁴ D.M. Pritchard, *Public Spending and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Austin 2015) 114-15.

¹⁵ Pritchard (n. 14) 92-8; id., 'Public Finance and War in Ancient Greece', *G&R* 62 (2015) 48-59, at 53.

¹⁶ Pritchard (n. 14) 99-111; id. (n. 15) 57.

¹⁷ Pritchard (n. 14) 28-40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 40-51.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 49, 51-90.

²⁰ Kyle (n. 4) 170-1.

²¹ For these three *gymnasia* see e.g. Kyle (n. 9) 56-92.

not only the completion of the stone theatre of Dionysus but also the building of the Panathenaic stadium and the renovation of the Lyceum.²² Athenian treasurers kept a close watch on the finances of these athletics fields (e.g. *IG* i³ 369). The *dēmos* introduced a poll tax on its horsemen, hoplites and archers for the upkeep of the Lyceum (*IG* i³ 138).²³

This public support of sport was reflected in Old Comedy.²⁴ Surviving comedies can give the impression that simply everyone in the public eye was a victim of comic ridicule. Yet an important study of the targets of the Old Comedy writers shows that one group of conspicuous Athenians escaped such personal attacks: Athenian athletes.²⁵ In contrast to their treatment of other upper-class activities, the comic poets also did not subject athletics to sustained parody or direct criticism. They assumed that sport was an overwhelming good thing. For example, in *Clouds* Aristophanes couples the ‘old education’, of which athletics is the main component, with norms of citizenship and manliness (*Nub.* 961, 972-84, 1002-32). His ‘Better Argument’ argues that traditional education flourished at the same time as two of the cardinal virtues of the Greek city: justice and *sōphrosunē* (or ‘moderation’) (960-2; cf. *Ran.* 727-8). It also nurtured ‘the men who fought at Marathon’ (*Nub.* 985-6). According to ‘Better Argument’, this education ensures a boy will have ‘a shining breast, a bright skin, big shoulders, a small tongue, a big backside and a small penis’ (1009-14; cf. 1002). Depictions of athletes on red-figure pots reveal most of these to be the physical attributes of the ‘beautiful’ young man.²⁶ The ‘new education’ of the sophists, ‘Better Argument’ continues, results in ‘pale skin’ and other undesirable physical features, and has emptied the wrestling schools of students’ (103, 119-20, 186, 407, 718, 986-8, 1017, 1112, 1171).

Tragic poets and public speakers also depicted athletics as an unambiguously good thing.²⁷ Athenian playwrights may have come from the upper class, but their audience was drawn from the same social strata as assembly-goers (e.g. *Ar. Ran.* 778-9; *Pl. Leg.* 700c-1a; *Resp.* 492b-c).²⁸ Even at the festival of the Great Dionysia, where representatives of

²² *IG* ii² 457.b5-9; *Hyp.* fr. 118 Jensen; *Plut. Mor.* 841c-d, 852a-e.

²³ M.H. Jameson, ‘Apollo Lykeios in Athens’, *Archaiolognosia* 1 (1980) 213-36.

²⁴ Pritchard (n. 10) 113-20; P. Thiery, ‘Sport et comédie au V^e siècle’, *Quaderni di Dioniso* 1 (2003) 144-67.

²⁵ A.H. Sommerstein, ‘How to Avoid Being a *Komodoumenos*’, *CQ* 46 (1996) 327-56, esp. 331.

²⁶ E.g. Pritchard (n. 10) 77, fig. 2.3.

²⁷ E.g. *Aeschin.* 1.11, 138; *Antiph.* 3.2.3; *Eur. Alc.* 1026-7, 1033; Pritchard (n. 10) 103-13, 120-30, 138-56.

²⁸ M. Heath, *Political Comedy in Aristophanes* (Göttingen 1987) 13; D.M. Pritchard, ‘Aristophanes and de Ste. Croix: The Value of Old Comedy as Evidence for Athenian Popular Culture’, *Antichthon* 45 (2010) 14-51, 17, *pace* A.H. Sommerstein, ‘The Theatre Audience, the *Demos* and the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus’, in C. Pelling (ed.), *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (Oxford 1997) 63-79.

Athens's imperial subjects were present (e.g. *Ar. Ach.* 502-7; *Isoc.* 8.82), the majority of theatre-goers were non-elite Athenians.²⁹ Formally ten judges voted on who should win the dramatic *agōnes*.³⁰ But they took their cue from the noisy responses that theatre-goers made to each play.³¹ Consequently, theatre-goers could indirectly determine which playwright should win.³² The result, as far as Aristotle and Plato could see, was that playwrights had generally to confirm the perceptions of their predominantly non-elite audience.³³

The performance-dynamic that public speakers faced was similar. While litigants and politicians also belonged to the elite, their audiences were also predominantly non-elite.³⁴ Jurors, assembly-goers, and councillors were just as noisy as theatre-goers (e.g. *Dem.* 5.2; 10.44; 19.113, 122; 21.14; *Lys.* 12.73).³⁵ Yet there was also an important difference in what public speakers faced: through their votes their audiences directly determined who would win the case or the debate. Consequently, litigants and politicians were under still more pressure generally to say what their audiences wanted to hear (e.g. *Arist. Rh.* 1.9.30-1; 2.21.15-16; 2.22.3; *Pl. Resp.* 493d). In the light of this it is widely agreed that their speeches are reliable evidence for Athenian popular culture.³⁶ Therefore the depiction of athletics in popular literature puts beyond doubt that the *dēmos* held athletics in very high esteem. The preference that they showed for athletic

²⁹ C. Orfanos, 'Le *Ploutos* d'Aristophane: Un éloge de la pauvreté?', in E. Galbois and S. Rougier-Blanc (eds), *La pauvreté en Grèce ancienne: Formes, représentations, enjeux* (Bordeaux 2014) 213-22, 216, 218; D.K. Roselli, *Theater of the People: Spectators and Society in Ancient Athens* (Austin 2011) 115-57.

³⁰ E. Csapo and W.J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor 1994) 157-65.

³¹ E.g. *Dem.* 18.265; 19.33; 21.226; *Pl. Resp.* 492a; *Leg.* 659a; D.M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens: An Introduction to the Plays* (Oxford 1995) 11-12; R.W. Wallace, 'Poet, Public and "Theatrocracy": Audience Performance in Classical Athens', in L. Edmunds and R.W. Wallace (eds), *Poet, Public, and Performance in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore 1997) 97-111, esp. 98-106.

³² J. Davidson, 'Theatrical Production', in J. Gregory (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Malden and Oxford 2005) 194-211, 208-9.

³³ E.g. *Arist. Poet.* 1453a; *Pol.* 1341b10-20; *Pl. Leg.* 659a-c, 700a-1b.

³⁴ For the social class of public speakers see e.g. Pritchard (n. 10) 5-6. For that of jurors and assembly-goers see e.g. M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology*, tr. J.A. Crook (Cambridge MA and Oxford 1991) 125-78, 183-6; J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton 1989) 132-8, 141-7; S.C. Todd 'Lady Chatterley's Lover and the Attic Orators: The Social Composition of the Athenian Jury', in E. Carawan (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Attic Orators* (Oxford 2007) 312-58.

³⁵ R.K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought* (Malden, Melbourne and Oxford 2006) 67-8; J. Roisman, *The Rhetoric of Manhood: Masculinity and the Attic Orators* (Berkeley 2005) 135-9.

³⁶ E.g. Balot (n. 35) 50; E. Galbois and S. Rougier-Blanc, 'Introduction de la 1^{ère} partie', in Galbois and Rougier-Blanc (n. 29) 37-44, 43; Ober (n. 34) 43, 184-5, 312; Roisman (n. 35) 3-6.

contests in their state-sponsored festivals and the care that they took in managing sporting infrastructure were the results of their generally pro-sport outlook.

3. THE PARADOX OF ELITE SPORT UNDER THE DEMOCRACY

For boys and young men, training in athletics only took place in the regular school-classes of the *paidotribēs* ('athletics teacher').³⁷ Isocrates explains how athletics teachers instruct their pupils in 'the moves devised for competition' (15.183). They train them in athletics, accustom them to toil, and compel them to combine each of the lessons that they have learnt (184-5). For Isocrates this training turns pupils into competent athletic competitors as long as they have enough natural talent. Athletics teachers were most frequently depicted in classical texts or on red-figure pots giving lessons in wrestling or in the other so-called 'heavy' events of boxing and the *pankration* (e.g. Ar. *Eq.* 490-2, 1238-9; Pl. *Alc. I* 107e-8e; *Grg.* 456d-e).³⁸ This is not unexpected, because many of these teachers owned their own *palaistra* or wrestling school (e.g. Aeschin. 1.10; Pl. *Lysis* 204a, 207d; *Grg.* 456c-e). What is unexpected is that we also find them training their students in the standard 'track and field' events of Greek athletics.³⁹ For example, in his *Statesman* Plato outlines how there are in Athens 'very many' supervised 'training sessions for groups' (294d-e; cf. *Grg.* 520c-d). In these school-classes, he writes, instructions are given and *ponoi* are expended not only for wrestling but also 'for the sake of competition in the foot-race or some other event'.

For the entire classical period, excepting its last decade, Athenian democracy never subsidised nor administered education.⁴⁰ Consequently, each family made its own decisions about how long their boys would be at school and whether they would take each of the three traditional educational disciplines: athletics, music and letters.⁴¹ Classical-period writers understood that the number of disciplines that a boy could pursue and the length of his schooling depended on his family's financial resources.⁴² Money determined not only whether a family could pay school-fees but also whether they could give their sons the *skholē* ('leisure') that they needed to pursue disciplines that were taught concurrently.⁴³ Classical-period writers make clear that most poor citizens were unable to afford

³⁷ W. Petermandl, 'Growing up with Greek Sport: Education and Athletics', in Kyle and Christesen (n. 4) 236-45, 237-8; Pritchard (n. 10) 46-53.

³⁸ Pritchard (n. 10) 178, fig. 5.1.

³⁹ E.g. Pritchard (n. 10) 50, fig. 2.1.

⁴⁰ Pritchard (n. 10) 53-8.

⁴¹ For these three disciplines see e.g. Pl. *Alc. I* 118d; *Cleitophon* 407b-c; *Prt.* 312b, 325e, 326c.

⁴² E.g. Arist. *Pol.* 1291b28-30, 1317b38-41; Pl. *Ap.* 23c; *Prt.* 326c; Xen. *Cyn.* 2.1; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.5.

⁴³ For this concurrent scheduling see e.g. Ar. *Nub.* 963-4.

many or, at times, any slaves (e.g. Ar. *Eccl.* 539; Arist. *Pol.* 1323a5-7; Hdt. 6.137; Lys. 24.6). Therefore, they typically needed their children to help them to run farms or businesses.⁴⁴ These writers were well aware of how this child-labour restricted the educational opportunities of Athenian boys (e.g. Isoc. 7.43-5; 14.48; Xen. *Cyn.* 8.3.37-9).

In *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* I collect the evidence that shows how this economic barrier generally prevented poor families from sending their sons to classes in music and athletics.⁴⁵ Instead, they sent them only to those of a letter teacher, because they believed that such classes were much more useful for moral and practical education.⁴⁶ Therefore it was only wealthy boys who received training in all of the three educational disciplines. As the *dēmos* clearly believed that education in athletics was indispensable for creditable sporting performance,⁴⁷ lower-class boys and young men would have been discouraged from entering sporting competitions in the first place. Therefore, in the most fully developed democracy of pre-modern times, athletes continued to be drawn predominantly or, possibly even, exclusively from the state's upper class.⁴⁸

Poor families also faced a cultural barrier to their practising of athletics.⁴⁹ The Athenian state never set an income or property qualification for elite membership.⁵⁰ It simply lacked the means of independently assessing the personal wealth of its citizens.⁵¹ Instead, being identified as wealthy was a matter of perception: a citizen belonged to this stratum if his family did what the wealthy normally did. Elite Athenians set themselves apart by paying the *eisphora* and performing expensive liturgies.⁵² The *eisphora* was an intermittent tax on property to pay for war. The wealthy

⁴⁴ M. Golden, *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (Baltimore and London 1990) 34-6.

⁴⁵ Pritchard (n. 10) 58-83, *contra* N. Fisher, 'Competitive Delights: The Social Effects of the Expanded Programme of Contests in Post-Kleisthenic Athens', in N. Fisher and H. van Wees (eds), *Competition in the Ancient World* (Swansea 2011) 175-219.

⁴⁶ D.M. Pritchard, 'Athens', in W.M. Bloomer (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Education* (Chichester 2015) 112-22, esp. 115-21.

⁴⁷ E.g. Aeschin. 3.179-80; Aesch. frag. 78a.34-5 Snell, Kannicht and Radt; Isoc. 16.32-3; Pl. *Leg.* 807c.

⁴⁸ For this high level of development see e.g. D.M. Pritchard, 'The Symbiosis between Democracy and War: The Case of Ancient Athens', in D.M. Pritchard (ed.), *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 2010) 1-62, 3-4; Pritchard (n. 14) 7-8.

⁴⁹ P. Bourdieu, 'Sport and Social Class', *Social Science Information* 17 (1978) 819-40, remains the classic study of cultural barriers to sporting participation.

⁵⁰ Pritchard (n. 10) 7, 75-6; J.-M. Roubineau, *Les cités grecques (VI^e-II^e siècle av. J.-C.): Essai d'histoire sociale* (Paris 2015) 98-102.

⁵¹ M.R. Christ, 'The Evolution of the *Eisphora* in Classical Athens', *CQ* 57 (2007) 53-69, at 57; Hansen (n. 34) 111.

⁵² For the wealthy as liturgists see e.g. J.K. Davies, *Wealth and the Power of Wealth in Classical Athens* (New York 1981) 9-14. For their paying of the *eisphora* see e.g. Antiph. 2.3.8; Ar. *Eq.* 923-6; Dem. 4.7; 10.37; 27.66; Lys. 22.13; 27.9-10; Christ (n. 51) 54.

also pursued pastimes that were too expensive and time-consuming for the poor.⁵³ Athletics was perceived to be one such pastime.⁵⁴ Poor Athenians well understood that the wealthy faced heavy taxes and popular prejudices (see below). The small number of them that sat just below the elite may have been able to send their sons to the classes of an athletics teacher. But they probably decided not to do so, because they feared that others would incorrectly perceive them as wealthy (cf. Ar. *Plut.* 335-85).⁵⁵ In classical Athens families probably took up athletics only when they had already arrived at the top and wanted to be recognised publicly for their new membership of the elite.⁵⁶

There were, of course, other activities in classical Athens, such as the drinking party, pederastic homosexuality, political leadership and horsemanship, which were also exclusive preserves of the wealthy.⁵⁷ But these elite pursuits differed from athletics in one critical respect: they were regularly criticised in Old Comedy and the other genres of popular literature. Poor Athenians may have hoped, one day, to enjoy the lifestyle of the wealthy.⁵⁸ Yet they still had problems with this social class's exclusive pursuits. Wealthy citizens were criticised for, among other things, their excessive enjoyment of two elements of the *sumposion* ('drinking party'): alcohol and prostitutes.⁵⁹ In the eyes of the *dēmos* intoxicated symposiasts were prone to commit *hubris* or physical and verbal assault (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 1251-67, 1299-303). This crime was perceived to be typical of the wealthy.⁶⁰ Poor Athenians believed that expenditure on a *sumposion* came at the expense of a wealthy citizen's ability to pay his taxes.⁶¹

The *dēmos* of classical Athens apparently never ended up condemning pederasty outright.⁶² Otherwise it is hard to explain why their politicians occasionally focussed on this pursuit for metaphors to describe political behaviours that were widely viewed as positive (e.g. Ar. *Eq.* 730-40; Thuc. 2.43.1). Nevertheless, the judgement that lower-class Athenians made of this activity was largely negative, because public speakers, along with the comic and the tragic poets, more often than not depicted boy-love as a source of anxiety, associated it with stereotypical vices of the upper class, and misrepresented the relationship of an *erastēs* ('lover') with his

⁵³ Pritchard (n. 10) 4-6; Roubineau (n. 50) 89-94.

⁵⁴ E.g. Ar. *Ran.* 727-30; *Vesp.* 1190-5, 1202-13; Eur. *Bacch.* 454-9; *El.* 528; *Hel.* 205-10, 366-70; *IA* 206-30; *IT* 435-8; *Phoen.* 366-70; Pritchard (n. 10) 67-74, 121-2.

⁵⁵ Pritchard (n. 10) 75-6.

⁵⁶ Kyle (n. 9) 113-21, 123, 149-51, *pace* Fisher (n. 45) 198-200.

⁵⁷ Pritchard (n. 10) 130-1.

⁵⁸ E.g. Ar. *Av.* 592-600, 1105-8; *Plut.* 133-4; *Thesm.* 289-90; *Vesp.* 708-11.

⁵⁹ E.g. Aeschin. 1.42; Ar. *Eccl.* 242-4; *Eq.* 92-4; *Vesp.* 79-80; *Av.* 285-6; *Ran.* 715, 739-40.

⁶⁰ E.g. Roisman (n. 35) 92-4.

⁶¹ E.g. Ar. *Ran.* 431-3, 1065-8; Dem. 36.39; Lys. 14.23-5; 19.9-11; Roisman (n. 36) 89-92.

⁶² Pritchard (n. 10) 131-3.

erōmenos ('beloved') as the same as the one between a customer and a male prostitute (e.g. Aeschin. 1.75-6; Ar. *Av.* 127-42; *Plut.* 149-59).⁶³ Therefore, it appears that athletics was not only highly valued and practically supported by Athenian democracy. It also escaped the otherwise universal criticism of elite pastimes in Athenian popular culture.⁶⁴ Why this is the case has long been an unanswered question.

4. POPULAR IDEAS AND MODERN THEORIES

There have long been competing popular ideas about sport's impact on war.⁶⁵ These ideas have led to a wide range of modern theories about this impact. The Duke of Wellington may have never said, as he is famously reported to have said, that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton. But it is true that from the nineteenth century boys at English elite private schools were made to play organised sport for the sake of their morality.⁶⁶ Sports, such as rugby, cricket, and athletics, were widely thought to teach them the personal values that they needed to run businesses, to administer the British Empire, and to fight for king and country. Elite contemporaries in Europe and North America saw these school sports as a secret of Britain's economic and imperial success. Consequently, they sought to establish amateur clubs for playing them in the hope of raising the fortunes of their own countries. These clubs quickly formed national organisations, out of which came international sporting bodies. A good example is the International Olympic Committee. It brought itself into existence in Paris in 1894.⁶⁷ As the leading proponent of its establishment, Pierre de Coubertin believed that revived Olympic Games would bring hostile countries together and encourage world peace.⁶⁸

Drawing explicitly on his own personal experience of an English elite private school, George Orwell came to different conclusions about sport's impact in a newspaper column that was published in December 1945. The Soviet Union had recently sent over one of its premier soccer teams in order to play local English clubs, ostensibly for the sake of maintaining peaceful relations between the two wartime allies. But things, as they say, did not go according to plan: after controversies over team selection and

⁶³ T.K. Hubbard, 'Popular Perceptions of Elite Homosexuality in Classical Athens', *Arion* 6 (1998) 48-78; id., 'History's First Child Molester: Euripides' *Chrysippus* and the Marginalization of Pederasty in Athenian Democratic Discourse', in J. Davidson, F. Muecke and P. Wilson (eds), *Greek Drama III: Essays in Honour of Kevin Lee* (London 2006) 223-44, *pace* Fisher (n. 45) 197-8.

⁶⁴ Pritchard (n. 10) 136-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-30.

⁶⁶ A. Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 2nd edn (Chicago and Urbana 2001) 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-20.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

refereeing, violent confrontations on the soccer field, and unsporting behaviour from the spectators, the Soviet team prematurely left England after only two games. For Orwell this debacle of the Moscow Dynamos was due to aggressive nationalism.⁶⁹ It vindicated the widely held scepticism about the supposed potential of sport to foster peaceful co-existence. 'Even if', he wrote, 'one didn't know from concrete examples (the 1936 Olympic Games, for instance) that international sporting contests lead to orgies of hatred, one could deduce it from the general principles.' Orwell suggests that the linking of a sporting team to 'some larger unit' inevitably arouses 'the most combative instincts'. At the international level, this encourages spectators, along with entire nations, to believe that 'running, jumping and kicking a ball are tests of national virtue', and to allow winning at any cost. As a result, Orwell concludes, 'Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.'

Needless to say, the IOC has never accepted any such criticism of its belief in sport's encouraging of peace. De Coubertin's successors have continued to believe that promoting world peace and reconciling warring nations are the chief purposes of the Olympics.⁷⁰ In doing so, however, they have never exactly explained how sport might achieve this peace-making end. By contrast, coherent ideas about sport's impact on aggression have long had currency in the western world's popular cultures. For example, coaches of American football believe that playing sport is a safe way to reduce aggression, reinforces socially constructive values, and hence reduces the likelihood of war.⁷¹ Sports journalists cherish the idea that simply *watching* sport can reduce aggression.⁷² Within the social sciences this popular view of sport as a safety valve for aggression has been integrated into different theories of catharsis, which ultimately go back to Aristotle and Freud. Possibly the most influential of them has been the drive-discharge model of catharsis that was invented by Konrad Lorenz.⁷³ As a pioneer of ethology, Lorenz argued that aggression is an innate drive that constantly accumulates as aggressive tension. For Lorenz this accumulation is similar to the operation of a steam boiler: aggressive tension builds up to a point where it must be released, either as an uncontrolled explosion or in a series of controlled discharges.

⁶⁹ G. Orwell, 'The Sporting Spirit', in S. Orwell and I. Angus (eds), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. IV: 'In Front of Your Nose' 1945-50 (London 1973) 40-4.

⁷⁰ Guttman (n. 66) 1-2, 99, 181.

⁷¹ R.G. Sipes, 'War, Sport and Aggression', *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973) 64-86, at 66-7.

⁷² A. Guttman 'The Appeal of Violent Sports', in J. Goldstein (ed.), *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment* (New York and London 1998) 7-26, at 18.

⁷³ K. Lorenz, *On Aggression*, tr. M.K. Wilson (New York 1966).

Aggression can thus be safely released through socially acceptable activities such as sport.⁷⁴

This drive-discharge model of catharsis is still sometimes favourably drawn on by ancient sports historians,⁷⁵ but it is now generally discredited in the social sciences. Social psychologists have shown that what Lorenz's model predicts about sport and aggression are entirely unfounded: far from an inverse relationship, sport manifestly increases aggressiveness. For example, an empirical study of students at Indiana University found that the level of unprovoked aggression among those playing American football was much higher than those who played no sport whatsoever.⁷⁶ Sport seems to have a similar impact on spectators. Interviews at an Army–Navy gridiron game in Philadelphia showed that male spectators were much more aggressive after the game, regardless of whether their team won or lost.⁷⁷ A similar study achieved the same results with Canadian spectators of ice hockey:⁷⁸ watching this sport not only significantly raised the general aggression of males *and* females, but also diminished their ability to interact cooperatively with others. These results, the study concludes, 'call into question an assumption that sports events are necessarily rich social occasions where goodwill and warm inter-personal relations are fostered.'

Another discipline that has challenged the drive-discharge theory of catharsis is anthropology. Anthropologists assume that human aggression is not an innate quality. For them it is something that is learnt or, at least, entirely shaped by socio-cultural factors.⁷⁹ Some anthropologists also assume that common values inform disparate social activities and that large patterns of a culture tend to support each other. Claude Lévi-Strauss for one assumed that different structures of meaning in a culture tend to 'overlap, intersect and reinforce one another.'⁸⁰ Finally, Günther Lüschen infers from anthropological case-studies that 'sport is indeed an expression of that socio-cultural system in which it occurs.'⁸¹ For Lüschen sport not

⁷⁴ Ibid., 231-3, 242-3.

⁷⁵ E.g. H.W. Pleket, Review of M. Golden, *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1998), *Nikephoros* 13 (2000) 281-93, at 281; N. Pivey, *The Olympic Games: A History* (Oxford 2004) 2-3.

⁷⁶ D. Zillmann, R.C. Johnson and K.D. Day, 'Provoked and Unprovoked Aggressiveness in Athletics', *Journal of Research in Personality* 8 (1974) 139-52, esp. 146-7, 150.

⁷⁷ J.H. Goldstein and R.L. Arms, 'Effects of Observing Athletic Contests on Hostility', *Sociometry* 34 (1971) 83-90, esp. 88-9.

⁷⁸ R.L. Arms, G.W. Russell and M.L. Sandilands, 'Effects on Hostility of Spectators of Viewing Aggressive Sports', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 42 (1979) 275-9, esp. 278-9.

⁷⁹ E.g. Sipes (n. 71) 66-7.

⁸⁰ N. Morley, *Theories, Models and Concepts in Ancient History* (London and New York 2004) 123.

⁸¹ G. Lüschen, 'The Interdependence of Sport and Culture', in G. Lüschen (ed.), *The Cross-Cultural Analysis of Sport and Games* (Champaign 1970) 85-99, at 87.

only bears out a society's values and norms. It also 'socialises' towards them and generally helps to articulate and to legitimise a society's structures.⁸² In a widely acclaimed study, Richard Sipes draws these assumptions together into a new theory about sport's impact on war. He calls his theory the cultural-pattern model.⁸³ This model views the 'intensity and configuration' of aggression as 'predominantly cultural characteristics'. It assumes 'a strain toward consistency in each culture, with similar values and behaviour patterns, such as aggressiveness, tending to manifest in more than one area of culture'. Consequently, behaviours and cultural patterns 'relative to war and warlike sports tend to overlap and *support each other's presence*.'⁸⁴ Sipes's model predicts a direct relationship between warlike sports and war: warlike sports are more likely to occur in warlike societies than peaceful ones.

5. THE CULTURAL OVERLAP BETWEEN SPORT AND WAR

The classical Athenians thought about sport and war with a common set of concepts. No ancient writer comments on this cultural overlap. However, Sipes's cultural-pattern model suggests that this overlap could account for the paradox of elite sport under Athenian democracy. The most fundamental cultural overlap between the two was that battle and a sporting event were considered an *agōn*, that is, a contest decided by mutually agreed rules.⁸⁵ Today, when western democracies sometimes wage war contrary to international law, it can be easily forgotten that war was once regulated by widely discussed conventions and was once viewed as a legitimate way to settle disputes between states. Indeed, before the First World War, the waging of war resembled the playing of sport 'in being to some extent artificial, regulated and ritualized'.⁸⁶ As 'a test as rule-bound as a tournament' the regular hoplite battle of classical Greece belonged to this tradition of ritualised war-making.⁸⁷

Typically a Greek state informed the other state of its intention to attack by sending it a herald (e.g. Hdt. 5.81.2; Thuc. 1.29.1, 85.2, 145.1; 2.12.1-2). Once its army had arrived in the *khōra* ('countryside') of its

⁸² Ibid., 93-4.

⁸³ Sipes (n. 71) 64-5.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 65 (my italics).

⁸⁵ Pritchard (n. 10) 165-76; M. Trundle, 'Greek Athletes and Warfare in the Classical Period', *Nikephoros* 25 (2012) [2014] 221-37, at 222 and 227.

⁸⁶ T.J. Cornell, 'On War and Games in the Ancient World', in T.J. Cornell and T.B. Allen (eds), *War and Games* (Rochester and Woodbridge 2002) 37-72, at 37.

⁸⁷ J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, tr. J. Lloyd (New York 1988) 38. For these conventions see e.g. Cornell (n. 86) 43-6; R. Lonis, *Guerre et religion en Grèce à l'époque classique: Recherches sur les rites, les dieux, l'idéologie de la victoire* (Paris 1979) 25-9; P. Krentz, 'Fighting by the Rules: The Invention of the Hoplite Agōn', *Hesperia* 71 (2002) 23-39.

enemy, it customarily began to destroy crops, vines and fruit-bearing trees and to loot livestock and moveable property. Since it was not easy, however, for it to destroy much without a permanent base, this ravaging was largely symbolic.⁸⁸ The goal was instead to convince its opponents that they could only meet their duty to protect their *khōra* and this challenge to their *aretē* by sending out their own hoplites for a pitched battle (e.g. Thuc. 2.11.6-8; cf. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.14).⁸⁹ By agreement, their hoplite armies met in the topography that was best suited for a pitched battle: an agricultural plain (e.g. Hdt. 7.9; Plut. *Mor.* 193e). After hours of hand-to-hand fighting, the decisive moment was the *tropē* ('turning'), when the hoplites of one side broke and ran for their lives (e.g. Eur. *Heracl.* 841-2). The victors pursued them only for a short distance before turning to what they had to do on the battlefield. There they collected the bodies of their dead comrades, stripped the bodies of the enemy, and used some of the weapons and the armour that they had captured to set up a *tropaion* ('trophy') on the exact spot where the *tropē* had occurred (e.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 277, 954). When the defeated had time to re-group, they sent a herald to those controlling the battlefield in order to ask for a truce in order to retrieve their dead (e.g. Plut. *Nic.* 6.5-6; Thuc. 4.44, 97). Custom dictated that the victors could not honourably refuse this request. But asking for a truce was recognised as the decisive concession of defeat.⁹⁰

These conventions were respected by and large in most battles between phalanxes of hoplites.⁹¹ Sometimes states decided not to do so, but this, clearly, was not without cost. These conventions were described as *nomima* or *nomoi*, that is, unwritten laws, which were 'common' and belonged to 'the Greeks' or 'all of Greece'.⁹² What is more, the conventions concerning the war dead, heralds and sanctuaries were thought to be backed by the gods.⁹³ Thus, while the obeying of such *nomoi* was voluntary, a state that failed to do so could normally be condemned for law-breaking and even impiety (e.g. [Dem.] 12.3; Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.32). Individuals understandably were indignant at such contraventions and felt shame about doing so themselves.⁹⁴ Such law-breaking could even compromise the standing of a *polis* or the value of its military victory. As Greek states sensibly sought to

⁸⁸ V.D. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, revised edn (Berkeley 1998).

⁸⁹ J.E. Lendon, *The Song of Wrath: The Peloponnesian War Begins* (New York 2010) 6, 81, 116, 261.

⁹⁰ E.g. Hdt. 1.82; Thuc. 4.44.5-6; Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.22-5; 7.5.26.

⁹¹ P. Hunt, *War, Peace and Alliance in Demosthenes' Athens* (Cambridge 2010) 222; H.W. Singor, 'War and International Relations', in K.A. Raaflaub and H. van Wees (eds), *A Companion to Archaic Greece* (Boston, Malden and Melbourne 2009) 585-603, at 597-8.

⁹² E.g. Dem. 60.8; Eur. *Heracl.* 1010; *Supp.* 19, 311, 526, 671; Lys. 2.9; Thuc. 1.85.2; 3.59.1; 4.97.2-3, 98.2, 7-8; cf. Isoc. 12.46; Thuc. 3.9.1; Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.22.

⁹³ E.g. Eur. *Supp.* 19; Lys. 2.9; Soph. *Ant.* 450-5; Thuc. 4.92.7, 97.2-3, 98.6-7.

⁹⁴ E.g. Eur. *Andr.* 435-6; *Rhes.* 510-17; Soph. *Phil.* 90-1, 120, 1007-12, 1224-51.

avoid costly defeats, they regularly declined the challenges of armies that were larger than their own.⁹⁵ But their refusal to fight could easily be viewed as cowardice (e.g. Eur. *Supp.* 314-23). Likewise, using a stratagem other than a clash of phalanxes to win a land battle was a mixed blessing; for it allowed the defeated to call into question whether the *agōn* had adjudicated which side was courageous (e.g. Dem. 60.21; Thuc. 4.40.2).

For classical Athenians the *agōnes* of athletics and war also tested the moral fibre and the physical capacities of sportsmen and soldiers.⁹⁶ Both activities were thought to involve *ponoi* ('toils') and *kindumoi* ('dangers').⁹⁷ This popular view of athletics as dangerous was justified.⁹⁸ The hand- and arm-bindings of a Greek boxer were designed, like knuckledusters, to protect his hands and to injure his opponent. The winner of a boxing-bout emerged only when one boxer gave up or was bashed unconscious. In fact boxers were occasionally killed (e.g. Paus. 6.4.2; 8.40.3-5). The depictions of them on black- and red-figure pots frequently showed blood streaming from their faces.⁹⁹ The classical Athenians also believed that victory was due to the *aretē* of athletes and soldiers, and the *kudos* ('divine aid') of state-protecting gods and demi-gods.¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the defeat of a sportsman and a soldier or his refusal to compete in either *agōn*-type was attributed to his cowardice.¹⁰¹

This cultural overlap between the *agōnes* of sport and battle raised the evaluation that lower-class Athenians had of athletics in two distinct ways. The first of them was closely tied to the standing of *polemos* ('war') in democratic Athens.¹⁰² The classical Athenians intensified and transformed the waging of war, frequently attacked other democracies and killed tens of thousands of fellow Greeks.¹⁰³ By the time Athenian democracy was

⁹⁵ For the ancient evidence see Krentz (n. 87) 27-8, 28-9 n. 23.

⁹⁶ Pritchard (n. 10) 176-88.

⁹⁷ For the *ponoi* of sporting contests see e.g. Eur. *Alc.* 1025-6; Pind. *Isthm.* 4.47; 5.22-5; *Ol.* 6.9-11; 10.22-3; *Nem.* 6.23-4. For those of battle see e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 695-7; *Eq.* 579; Eur. *Supp.* 373; Thuc. 2.38.1. For its dangers see e.g. Dem. 60.3-5; Lys. 2.20, 43, 50-1; Pl. *Menex.* 239a-b.

⁹⁸ Cornell (n. 86) 41-2; N.B. Crowther, 'Athlete as Warrior in the Ancient Games: Some Reflections', *Nikephoros* 12 (1999) 121-30, at 123, with n. 9.

⁹⁹ E.g. Pritchard (n. 10) 178, fig. 5.1.

¹⁰⁰ For the *aretē* of athletes see e.g. C.M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 171-2. For that of combatants see e.g. Dem. 60.21; Lys. 2.4-6, 20, 64-5; Pl. *Menex.* 240d. For *kudos* for athletes see e.g. Soph. *El.* 697-9; Bowra, 173-4; D.M. Pritchard, 'Public Honours for Panhellenic Sporting Victors in Democratic Athens', *Nikephoros* 25 (2012) [2014] 209-20, at 212-13. For the same for soldiers see e.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 271-80; Ar. *Vesp.* 1085; Lys. 2.39; Thuc. 6.32.1.

¹⁰¹ For this cowardice of defeated athletes see e.g. Xen. *Mem.* 3.7.1; Bowra (n. 100) 182-3. For that of defeated combatants see e.g. Dem. 60.21; Eur. *Or.* 1475-88; Lys. 2.64-5.

¹⁰² Pritchard (n. 14) 117-20.

¹⁰³ Pritchard (n. 48) 5-7, 15-27.

fully consolidated, *polemos* had come to dominate their politics and their personal lives. War consumed more money than all other public activities combined and was waged more frequently than ever before.¹⁰⁴ Lower-class citizens valued war more highly than any other secular activity. They saw themselves as more courageous on the battlefield than the rest of the Greeks, their motives for waging wars as always just, and the history of their state, from the age of the heroes, as a series of almost unbroken military victories.¹⁰⁵

In democratic Athens war was manifestly more prominent as a public activity than athletics. The classical Athenians, it is true, devoted a great deal of time and money to athletic *agōnes*. But they devoted considerably more to their armed forces and actual military campaigns. These campaigns typically involved many thousands of non-elite hoplites and sailors. But the conception of these two activities as comparable meant that athletics was closely associated with a part of Athenian democracy's core business which was held in the highest possible esteem. The other exclusive pastimes of the wealthy lacked such a close connection with *polemos*. Therefore the cultural overlap between sport and battle gave athletics a real advantage over them in the evaluations that the *demos* regularly made of the elite's lifestyle.

6. THE DEMOCRATISATION OF WAR

Athens of the fifth century extended military service and traditional representations of it to every stratum of the lower class. Before Athenian democracy, war had largely been an elite pursuit.¹⁰⁶ Wars were waged infrequently and initiated privately by upper-class faction-leaders.¹⁰⁷ The hoplites of each war numbered in the hundreds rather than thousands and came predominantly from Athens's upper class.¹⁰⁸ How they represented their soldiering can be seen on archaic black- and red-figure pottery. The military scenes on this ware have been carefully analysed by François Lissarrague. These painted scenes show how upper-class Athenians drew on the values and the ideas of epic poetry in order to glorify their own martial deeds.¹⁰⁹ Good examples are those scenes of a hoplite who had

¹⁰⁴ In the fifth century they waged war in two out of every three years, with only ten year periods of peace (Pritchard [n. 48] 6).

¹⁰⁵ This is the consistent image of Athenian war-making in funeral orations and tragedy; see e.g. Dem. 60.11; Lys. 2.55; Eur. *Supp.* 306-42, 378-80; J. Crowley, *The Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite: The Culture of Combat in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 2012) 88-92.

¹⁰⁶ Pritchard (n. 48) 7-15; D.M. Pritchard, 'Democracy and War in Ancient Athens and today', *Greece and Rome* 62 (2015) 140-54, at 143-6.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 9.2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Singor (n. 91).

¹⁰⁹ F. Lissarrague, *L'autre guerrier: archers, peltastes, cavaliers dans l'imagerie attique* (Paris and Rome 1990) esp. 233-40.

been killed in action or of his corpse being carried back to Athens. The heroes of Homer discuss how they will gain deathless renown and deathless memory of their youthfulness by bravely dying in battle (e.g. *Il.* 12.318-28; 22.71-3, 304-5; cf. 22.362-4). By this ‘beautiful death’ a hero gains a lasting confirmation of his *aretē*, which is reflected in the beauty of his corpse (e.g. 22.71-3, 369-71). Painters sometimes represent this *aretē* of the dead hoplite by painting in a lion.¹¹⁰ This was one of the animals that Homer used as a metaphor of a hero’s *aretē* (e.g. *Il.* 5.782; *Od.* 8.161; 11.611). They evoked a hoplite’s attaining of the beautiful death of the heroes by giving him alone of the painted figures long hair, which is a characteristic of heroes in epic poetry (e.g. *Il.* 3.43; 2.443, 472; 18.359).

The creation of a publicly controlled army of hoplites as part of the reforms that Cleisthenes introduced at the sixth century’s close, the subsequent building of a massive Athenian public navy, and the introduction of pay for military service opened up the *agōnes* of war, like politics, to large numbers of non-elite citizens.¹¹¹ Because of the power that this social class wielded in Athenian democracy’s legal and political debates and dramatic *agōnes*, public speakers and playwrights found it necessary to represent the experiences of these new hoplites and sailors with the traditional moral explanation of *nikē* (‘victory’) in battle or the stadium (e.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 357-60, 386-401; Ar. *Vesp.* 684-5; Thuc. 2.86).¹¹²

This ideological democratisation of war can be observed best in the public funeral for the war dead.¹¹³ The ashes of these fallen Athenians were divided between ten cypress-caskets (one for each tribe) and publicly displayed in Athens’ civic centre (Thuc. 2.34). On the day of the funeral they were carried to the public cemetery where they were placed in ‘a beautiful and grandiose tomb’ (Pl. *Menex.* 234c). Such tombs were decorated with statues of lions and friezes of soldiers killing opponents that signified the *aretē* of those being buried.¹¹⁴ They had epigrams explaining that the dead had put their *aretē* beyond doubt, leaving behind an eternal memory of their courage (e.g. *IG* i³ 1179.3, 8-9; 1162.48). Finally, each tomb displayed a complete list of the year’s casualties,

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 71-96.

¹¹¹ Pritchard (n. 10) 200-3; Trundle (n. 85) 234.

¹¹² R.K. Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens* (Oxford 2014) 179-99; N. Loraux, ‘Mourir devant Troie, tomber pour Athènes’, in G. Gnoli and J.-P. Vernant (eds), *La mort, les morts dans les anciennes sociétés* (Cambridge and Paris 1982) 27-43; Pritchard (n. 10) 203-8.

¹¹³ N.T. Arrington, *Ashes, Images and Memories: The Presence of the War Dead in Fifth-Century Athens* (Oxford 2015).

¹¹⁴ P. Low, ‘Commemoration of the War Dead in Classical Athens: Remembering Defeat and Victory’, in D.M. Pritchard (ed.), *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 2010) 341-58, at 342-50.

including Athenian sailors, which was arranged by tribes (*IG* i³ 1142-93).¹¹⁵ The funeral oration that was traditionally delivered after this burial always outlined how the war dead had met the most beautiful death: by falling in battle for the state they had gained deathless renown and deathless remembrance not only of their *aretē* but also of their youth.¹¹⁶

This practical and ideological democratisation of war created a second way for the cultural overlap between sport and war to impact positively on the standing of sport. It meant that the Athenian *dēmos* not only closely associated athletics with the highly valued and prominent public activity of war. They also enjoyed a strong personal affinity with what athletes actually did. They could see how sportsmen displayed *aretē* and endured *kindunoi* and *ponoi*, just as they themselves did when they fought for Athens. Together these two ways fully account for why non-elite Athenians valued athletics and athletes as highly as they did, protected them from public criticism, and showed a strong preference for athletic *agōnes* over other contest-types in their program of festivals. The changes that non-elite Athenians made to the waging of war thus helped to support and to legitimise elite sport.

7. EPILOGUE: EPHEBIC SPORTSMEN

In the last decade of the classical period the Athenians took their first and only steps to facilitate the participation of the lower class in athletics. This occurred as part of a major military reform. In, probably, 336/5 Athens created a publicly funded program of full-time training for its future hoplites (Harp. s.v. Epicrates).¹¹⁷ It succeeded in getting large numbers of non-elite Athenians to participate in this *ephēbeia* by providing each eighteen year-old recruit some of his hoplite equipment and, for his two years as an *ephēbos*, daily maintenance and accommodation ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.2-4).¹¹⁸ Athletics was compulsory in this cadetship's first year. Under the supervision of a *gumnasiarkhos* each of the tribe's ephebes trained for competing in the torch races of several Athenian festivals.¹¹⁹ In addition, the democracy hired at its own expense not only *didaskaloi* ('teachers'), who taught the ephebes different modes of land-based

¹¹⁵ For the inclusion of Athenian sailors see e.g. D.M. Pritchard, 'The Fractured Imaginary: Popular Thinking on Citizen Soldiers and Warfare in Fifth-Century Athens', PhD dissertation (Macquarie University [Sydney] 1999) 234-40.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Dem. 60.32-3; Hyp. 6.27-30; Lys. 2.78-81; Pl. *Menex.* 247c, 248c; Thuc. 2.43-4.

¹¹⁷ J. L. Friend, 'The Athenian *Ephebeia* in the Lycurgan Period: 334/3-322/1 B.C.', PhD thesis (The University of Texas at Austin [Austin] 2009) 66-74.

¹¹⁸ About one half of 18-year olds participated in the reformed *ephēbeia* (Pritchard [n. 48] 55).

¹¹⁹ E.g. O.W. Reinmuth, *The Ephebic Inscriptions of the Fourth Century BC* (Leiden 1971) nos. 6, 13; Friend (n. 117) 116-18; N. Sekunda, 'IG II² 1250: A Decree concerning the *Lampadephoroi* of the Tribe Aiantis', *ZPE* 83 (1990) 149-82, 152-3.

combat, but also two *paidotribai* ('athletics teachers'), who, presumably, met with each tribal corps for regular athletics classes (3; *IG* ii² 585.9-11).

The *dēmos* had two good reasons for the inclusion of athletics in the *ephēbeia*. First, as sport, in their eyes, was a good way to gain *euexia* or physical fitness (e.g. Aeschin. 1.189; 3.255-6; Pl. *Prt.* 326b-c; Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.1-2), they no doubt decided that it could help the ephebes to meet the physical demands of their service as hoplites.¹²⁰ Already there existed a popular concern that elite hoplites could be unfit (e.g. Ar. *Plut.* 203, 558-61; Eur. frag. 54 Snell, Kannicht and Radt).¹²¹ Yet at the time of this reform the *dēmos* was, apparently, worried about the *euexia* of their army more generally, because at the battle of Chaeronea, three years earlier, Philip the Second had apparently exploited the greater physical fitness of his professional soldiers to defeat them (Polyaen. 4.2.7). Second, the *dēmos* saw athletics as a good way to train the young in the virtues that they needed for military success. Manifestly the teaching of such morality was a major goal of the cadetship. The magistrate, for example, who managed each of its tribal corps was called a *sōphronistēs*, that is, a teacher of *sōphrosunē*. The decrees that were passed in honour of each tribe's ephebes, when they had completed their second year, praised them for, among other virtues, their *kosmiotēs* ('orderliness'), *eutaxia* ('military discipline'), *sōphrosunē* and *aretē*.¹²² Athletics, we have seen, was closely associated with *sōphrosunē* in the minds of poor Athenians, while athletic competitors and hoplites needed, it was believed, the same personal virtues for victory. By making their ephebes sportsmen the Athenians were socialising them into the values of war. Therefore they had widened participation in athletics because of its clear military advantages. What made it possible for them to take these unprecedented steps was the close relationship that they already perceived between sport and war.

In the short term the *ephēbeia* would have had limited impact on the social background of Athenian athletes. Since citizens only joined the cadetship after reaching adulthood, families who wished to see their boys compete in games still had to send them to, and to pay for, the classes of a *paidotribēs*. Poor Athenians, moreover, who, as part of the new *ephēbeia*, had attended such classes and competed as *lampadēphoroi* would have been hesitant about entering other athletic contests. Some would have felt that they had left it too late to become athletic competitors, while all knew that they would be up against those who had trained and competed as athletes throughout their childhoods. In the longer term this exposure of lower-class *ephēboi* to athletics could have broken the elite's sporting monopoly. As long as it kept the participation-rate that it had in the later 330s and the 320s, the continuation of the *ephēbeia* beyond the classical

¹²⁰ Petermandl (n. 37) 238.

¹²¹ Pritchard (n. 28) 26.

¹²² For their *kosmiotēs* and *eutaxia*, see Reinmuth (n. 119) no. 2, lines 27, 31, 38-40, 53, 58. For *sōphrosunē* and *aretē*, see no. 7, lines 7-8; no. 9, lines 3, 13-14, 30-1.

period would have challenged the popular perception that athletics was an exclusive upper-class activity. This would have removed the cultural barrier that had long discouraged prosperous lower-class families from pursuing athletics. Yet this potential was never realised. The oligarchy that the Macedonians imposed on Athens in 322/1 abolished the *ephēbeia*.¹²³ When the democracy was restored in 307/6, it did begin training ephebes again. In its first several years this hellenistic *ephēbeia* attracted a reasonable, although smaller, number of non-elite recruits.¹²⁴ But in the course of its transformation during the third century the Athenian cadetship, while keeping athletics as a core activity, became a new exclusive pursuit of the Athenian elite.¹²⁵

L'Université de Strasbourg
The University of Queensland

DAVID M. PRITCHARD
d.pritchard@uq.edu.au

¹²³ S.V. Tracy, *Athenian Democracy in Transition: Attic Letter-Cutters of 340 to 290 BC* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1995) 17-18, 23-9. For the abolition of the *ephēbeia* see e.g. Friend (n. 117) 179-81.

¹²⁴ Reinmuth (n. 119) 101-15.

¹²⁵ M. Golden, *Greek Sport and Social Status* (Austin 2008) 38. For its transformation see J. D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens* (Berkeley 1998) 172-85, 243-9, 253-5. In the later third century the number of ephebes in each year ranged from 20 to 50 (S.V. Tracy, 'The Panathenaic Festival and Games: An Epigraphic Inquiry', *Nikephoros* 4 (1979) 133-53, 177-8), that is, between 4 and 10 per cent of the average number of ephebes per year in the later 330s and the 320s (Pritchard [n. 48] 55).