

Democracy in the aristophane's work "the acharnians" essay

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



Aristophanes is known as one of the greatest comedians of his times. Across all ages in history, his artistic work emerged as one of the most excellent plays in ancient Greek playwright. His play, " The Acharnians" is one of the classical works in the category of satirical genre of old comedy. It is also notable that Aristophanes develops the plot of the play with absurd humor and imaginations that captures the Peloponnesian war which Athenians had waged against Spartans for six years (Sommerstein 6).

As the plot unfolds, he attracts the attention of his audience including prominent poets and historians. Aristophanes engages himself in general politics that naturally appeal to the struggle of Athenian citizens against tyranny, mass representation and civic rights. According to him, democracy is the only form of unrestricted and complete system of governance that can allow a satirical suppression of private usage political and social power to torture other citizens (Sommerstein 17).

Nevertheless, the author continues to satirize the democracy which he has supported as he argues that it has turned Athens into a city of jurymen. It is against this backdrop that this paper argues how democracy works and proves whether it is a viable type of government or not.

Back in 5th century, democracy was used to denote people's power in ancient Greece. Therefore, the mode of governance became a popular manner of spreading politics.

On the other hand, Aristophanes define democracy as a form of government where there is a definite system of reforms that are meant to protect the

masses such that there could be no folly, vice or any form of misconduct to defile their private lives. He emphasizes that this form of government derives its legitimacy from public opinion.

This is evident from the play where the main protagonist, Dicaeopolos (who is one of the citizens in Athens) makes up his mind to adopt a peace policy (Sommerstein 7).

As the plot unfolds, the author reveals how Decaeopolos has faced misery after being invaded during Lacedaeminian attacks. In this case, the author uses his persona to expose his fear and frustrations of the Pelopossesian war (Sommerstein 7). According to him, a good government should advocate for peace rather than vengeance that has easily led to the destruction of the state and eventually caused it to decline.

The fact that Aristophanes uses his main persona to indicate how a democratic government should operate; there should be palpable manners through which it abides and defends the citizens against their assailants. Symbolically, his main persona makes a peace treaty with his frontiers where he makes an enclosure around his house (Sommerstein 33). This symbolizes the presence of peace and freedom to trade with other countries.

Nevertheless, this is ironical since democratic form of government does not always guarantee free market. Regardless of the fact that a democratic government should rule on the majority principle, Aristophanes feels that the leaders get pressured by the strong manipulators to deviate from majority rule for their selfish gains. This implies that in some instances, democratic

governments can turn out to be the majority tyranny against the minority and vice versa (Sommerstein 20).

The author notes that democracy can take many forms and thus continues to be an intricate concept. To some extent, it is difficult to define it accurately (Sommerstein 6). Throughout the play, the author gives his audience an immediate insight on the nature of the Greek democratic system and its mass representatives. He notes that six years after the Peloponnesian Wars begun in 431 A. D, the natives suffered a lot.

As the plot unfolds, Aristophanes explores the suffering of his state, Athens and the episode triggers him to write the play (Sommerstein 19). In his play, he is compelled to express his strong feelings against the war. It is apparent that he makes a mockery of democracy and leaders representing the citizens in public offices.

At this point, Aristophanes intends to convince the Athenian citizens of how ridiculous the war was. In addition to this, his heightened emotions directly relates to his mistrust of a democratic government. Furthermore, he is annoyed with the perspectives and actions of the leaders (Sommerstein 46).

According to him, the only way of bringing peace and stability in Athens was by being honest and transparent to the citizens. Besides, the author feels that for democracy to work, leaders need to diatribe themselves from fierce criticisms that easily lead to war. In his view, were it not for the lack of proper policies, the Peloponnesian war could not have occurred (Sommerstein 31).

However, the fact that he rules out democracy as the best form of government does not imply that it could never work. In this case, he highly emphasize that democracy can only work when the electorates submit to serve the demos with honesty and accountability without being compelled to act against the law for vested interests.

Empirically, it is evident from the play that democracy will only work better than any other form of government only if leaders are able to eradicate corruption, tyranny, make sound policies and become competent in representing the true will of the people (Sommerstein 12). It is worth to note that if this does not happen, democracy might not do better than other forms of government.

To recap it all, it is apparent that democracy can emerge as a viable form of government as Aristophanes points out in the play. It is also essential to note that democracy works well when applied in the most suitable manner. As Aristophanes points out, democracy can be vicious especially when mass representatives fail to operate according to the rule of the people. In this case, approaches used by leaders in enforcing democracy can determine whether it will work or fail.

Sommerstein, Alan. *Aristophanes, Lysistrata and Other Plays: The Acharnians*. New York: Penguin, 2002. Print.