2. Athens and the Polis

William Haines, June 19, 2026

> For if I nurse unruliness in those who are kin by birth
> Then I shall surely do so outside of the family.
> Any man who is solid among the members of his household
> Will be found to uphold justice in the polis too.
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> —Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, 661f.[1]

The general Greek term for kin was *genos* (γένος). The term had a familiar metaphorical use in the service of conceptual order, a use that survives in Western languages as one of an ordered series of terms defining a system of nested groups: kingdom, phylum [tribe], class, order, family, *genus*, species. We use this scheme of nested groups, bundles of bundles, to map our literal kinship with all living things.

The earliest recorded Greek move toward written law, the Athenian legislation of Draco, speaks of narrower and wider groups of a person's kin. Consider homicide, which in Athens at least was regarded as a grievance or tort between families rather than as a crime to be prosecuted by the state. When a man or woman is a homicide victim or suspect, which of their kin are to have what rights and responsibilities in the judicial proceedings? Draco's answer to this question grouped kin by degrees of closeness:

> Drakon drew on a model of the kindred, no doubt already familiar in broad outlines, as a set of concentric circles, with … the victim at the centre. The inmost circle contained only the victim's father, brothers, and sons; the next, all descendants of his grandfathers.

[1] Quoted in Strauss 1993, p. 46; translation modified. My "solid" here translates *chrēstos* (χρηστός), a fairly general term for "good."

> The outer circle consisted of descendants of the victim's great-grandfathers (i.e. those who stood in the relation of *anepsiôn paides*, second cousins to him), his affines (*pentheroi* and *gambroi*, wife-givers and wife-takers), and members of his phratry. … More distant agnates would be regarded simply as fellow-phrateres; non-local cognatic kin, if not members of the same phratry—for example, in the case of the aristocracy, whose alliances and kin networks might be far-flung—would fall into the category of hereditary guest-friends, *xenoi*, if the relationship were kept up.[2]

A scheme of concentric circles of kin coincides neatly with a scheme of nested groups to the extent that kinship is through one gender.

Now, while one's kin in general were one's *genos,* the household family was the *oikos* (οἶκος).[3] The *oikos* was primarily a household family, usually roughly a nuclear family, that might have resident slaves; but it was often more. "The (Athenian) *oikos* was … often a complex entity, which included various types of kinsmen (grandparents, aunts, etc.) and also non-kinsmen (slaves, friends, concubines, etc.) and owned more than one house."[4] Narrowly the word *oikos* could mean a *family* sharing a residence; broadly it could mean the whole household of people, including slaves.[5] Narrowly it could also mean a *house*, and broadly it could include the household's land.

Daughters married and left the household in their teens. Sons married in their late twenties or later, and might then start separate households, especially if they were younger sons. Scholars estimate that in classical Greece, about half

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2 Humphreys 2019, p. 14f.

3 Aristotle usually used the roughly equivalent but less common term *oikia* (οἰκία).

4 Trümper 2011, p. 33.

5 In general, Greek household slavery was not as profoundly destructive as the kind of slavery practiced in the United States before the Civil War (and almost nowhere else), nor as the sex slavery widely practiced today in the United States and around the world. And at least in Aristotle's Athens, many slaves were owned or leased by the city itself, working in the mines or as court clerks, archivists, accountants, police, etc. See Ismard 2017.

of all males of 18 years, and a third of all males of 25, had living fathers.[6] Hence especially among the strata sufficiently well-off to shape the intellectual culture, it would have been quite ordinary for a household family to include several free adult males.

The perceived relation between kinship organization and other social organization changed over time. In early Archaic Greece, writes the scholar Moses Finley,

> kinship thinking permeated everything. Even the relatively new, non-kinship institutions of the community were shaped as much as possible in the image of the household and the family. The perfect symbol, of course, was the metaphor of the king as father … The Greek verb *anassein*, which means "to be a lord," "to rule," is used in the [Homeric] poems for both the king (*basileus*) and the head of an *oikos* with almost complete indifference.[7]

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[6] Strauss 1993, pp. 62, 67-71. I have found no estimate of what percentage of households at a given time would have included multiple adult brothers.

[7] Finley 1954, p. 86. Finley comments further:

> The profundity of the Greeks' kinship attachment, throughout their history, is immediately apparent from their passion for genealogies. That never changed radically at any time. (p.78)
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> [In archaic Greece a key social distinction] between the ordinary landowner and the noble … was given divine sanction through genealogies that assigned every noble family a god for an ancestor, and was called a blood-distinction. (p. 56)
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> The authoritarian household, the *oikos*, was the center around which life was organized, from which flowed not only the satisfaction of material needs, including security, but ethical norms and values, duties, obligations, and responsibilities. (p. 54)
>
> [Among the nobles] when criminal acts were involved, the family, not the class (or the community as a whole), was charged with preserving the standards of conduct and with punishing any breach. (p. 77)
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> The superimposition of a community, the territorial unit under a king, upon the household-kinship system merely weakened the dominant position of the latter, but only in part and only in certain respects. Primarily it was war, defensive in particular, which was an activity of the community. (p. 84)

Later, for some centuries before and after Plato and Aristotle, the Greek world comprised about a thousand independent or (in the latter period) largely self-governing city-states, the majority having over a thousand inhabitants, and at first usually ruled by kings—if the English word "king" is appropriate in connection with such small communities. We call them cities, but most were very small towns by today's standards. They were personal communities.

The term *polis* (πόλις) was ambiguous in roughly the same four-part way as *oikos*. *Polis* could mean the community of citizens (members), or the larger community including all permanent residents; or it could mean the small walled area where most of them densely dwelt, or the group's whole territory including the land outside the walls.

Crucially, Greek cities were like families and lineages in being constituted by *members* (citizens), not merely populated by current subjects or residents. Not all of the permanent inhabitants of a city's territory were members. Usually the name of a Greek city-state was a plural noun for the members: the city-state was actually named "the Athenians" or "the Thebans."[8] And like family

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[8] Hansen 2006, p. 60. Thus, for example, a more literal translation of the title of Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* would be *Constitution of the Athenians*. But we should not take this point to show that the Greeks regarded a city simply as a set or sum of individuals. Roger T. Ames cites Zhou 2010:

> In weighing the extent to which social order was derived from and dependent upon family relations, Zhou [Yiqun] insists that in contrast to the Greeks, "the Chinese state was never conceived as a political community that equaled the sum of its citizens," and that [in China] "the relationship between the rulers and the ruled was considered analogous to the relationship between parents and children." (Ames 2012, p. 653; Ames & Rosemont 2013, p. 124; Ames 2014, p. 164; Ames 2018, p. 65; Ames 2019, p. 568; Ames 2020, p. 93f.; Ames 2021, p. 364; Ames 2023, p. 322)

(In fact Zhou 2010 does not say that the second point is a "contrast to the Greeks," and the book has much to say about the concrete underpinnings of the Greek "sense that the city is a family writ large": p. 93.)

When Zhou says "the Chinese state was never conceived as a political community that equaled the sum of its citizens," perhaps the thought is that in China the state was

membership, city membership was a set of gendered roles. A male citizen was a *politēs* (πολίτης); a female citizen was a *politis* (πολῖτις).[9] (The masculine plural was also used as the gender-indiscriminate plural.)

Throughout Greece, male and female citizenship were determined mainly by descent. Very often a city would regard itself as defined by a common ancestor, at least notionally; the common descent of the Athenians was a familiar motif in Athenian public discourse.[10]

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not conceived as a community with members (see Zhou 2010, p. 11). Some early Confucian texts embraced the idea that a state is something to enter or leave at will, even on a mass scale; and states frequently changed their rolls of subjects by frequently changing their territory. In these ways Chinese feudal states differed from families and lineages.

Conceiving a family or city as constituted by its members, as the Greeks did, and giving it a name like "the Joneses" or "the Athenians," might be mistaken for identifying it with the mereological sum of its members (or even of its currently living members). As compared to a lineage, a Greek city was more obviously distinct from its members, as a Greek city could predecease its members.

Aristotle argued cogently against the idea that the city-state equals the sum of its members (*Pol.* 1276a33-b11), and also relevantly held that a city-sized group of people, even if it is organized as an independent entity, does not constitute a city-state if it is too unified (*Pol.* 1261a15-22) or not unified enough (*Pol.* 1280b30-81a2).

Further, although Aristotle seems to have thought that the happiness (virtuous activity) of the city is best and normally realized in the happiness (virtuous activity) of its members, like Plato he did not think the happiness of a city is precisely the happiness of its members (Morrison 2001 and Morrison 2017, *passim*). Aristotle discusses this matter in several chapters of the *Politics*; key passages are 1278b15-24; 1324a5-12, 24f.; and 1332a33-38.

9 For detailed discussion of the citizenship of women in Athens, see Blok 2017. Aristotle uses the feminine noun *politis* (plural *politides*, πολίτιδες) to speak of female citizens at *Pol.* 1275b33 and 1278a28. And he comments at *Pol.* 1269b14-19:

> For just as a household has a man and a woman as parts, a city-state, too, is clearly to be regarded as being divided almost equally between men and women. So in all constitutions in which the position of women is bad, half the city-state should be regarded as having no laws. And this is exactly what has happened in Sparta.

But like many masters he sometimes forgets to think of women.

10 Strauss 1993, pp. 10f., 44f.

> Just as the family originated from a common ancestor and worshipped a hero as its source, so ancestors were created for the state as a whole; every town had its eponym. Even the new tribes [municipal subdivisions] which Cleisthenes created on a geographical principle were named after heroes. It was a ruling idea throughout antiquity that a community was composed of consanguineous groups of people, even though the relationship might be only fictitious, and the cults in which any social idea was expressed were therefore modelled upon the cult of the family.[11]

During the Classical period, a time of increasing geographical mobility and potential intermarriage, cities began to legislate the limitation of citizenship to kin. In Athens from 451 BC, to become a citizen one needed both a citizen father and a citizen mother. Some cities required citizen forebears on both sides for three generations, and some forbade marriage between citizens and non-citizens.

Thus being a member of a Greek city was quite unlike being a resident or subject in a pre-Qin state of China; for Greek city membership was not basically determined by the boundaries of a feudal territorial grant, the fortunes of war, and spontaneous migration. As a rule, a flourishing Greek city would not aim to accumulate residents or citizens by acquiring territory or attracting immigrants or even foreign spouses. On the contrary, when its population grew it would hive off independent colonies (*apoikiai*, ἀποικίαι), as households did when their younger men married. Hobbes said of these colonies in *Leviathan*,

> the commonwealth from which they went was called their metropolis, or mother, and requires no more of them, than fathers require of the children, whom they emancipate, and make free from their domestic government, which is honour, and friendship.[12]

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11 Nilsson 1949, p. 127.

12 Part 2, Chapter 24: "On the Nutrition and Procreation of Commonwealths."

The larger towns had municipal subdivisions. In Athens, "the relationship between the individual and the polis was mediated by a series of segmentary institutions—oikos, phratry [brotherhood] and deme—that each relied on kinship as a membership criterion,"[13] supplemented by the conceit that each phratry had its own common ancestor. Such units had a place even in the military. One scholar comments,

> Hoplite armies were traditionally organized by tribe and thus were partially family affairs. Three generations of men from the same family might all be stationed near enough to see one another during battle. Rather than fighting for an abstract cause, they fought for each other: they wanted to protect their comrades who were also friends and loved ones (*philoi*).[14] (Ludwig 2009, p. 302)

Relations between cities were also commonly understood in terms of kinship. In addition to the relation between mother city (mētropolis, μητρόπολις) and colony, some pairs of cities were understood to share an ancestor, and others by ritual means established a metaphorical kinship.[15]

Thus the Greek city had a strong and literally true sense that it was what we should call a very extended family—even though it practiced the occasional civic adoption, and the notional lines of distant kinship within the city did not perfectly coincide with the actual lines of kinship.

Still, a large extended family is not a *family* in any core sense of that word. Neither a Greek polis nor a Chinese lineage was approximately a nuclear household family. But that does not tell us whether either of them was envisioned as *analogous* to a family or at least to a household. In this connection, one difference between the largely endogamous Greek city and the exogamous Chinese lineage is that just as marriage is a bond linking main parts of a

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[13] Strauss 1993, p. 43.

[14] Ludwig 2009, p. 302.

[15] For a detailed discussion of classical Greek understandings of kinship and quasi-kinship between cities, see Fragoulaki 2013.

household family, so the Greeks saw marriage between citizens from different segments of the city as important for the city's unity, linking its parts.[16]

Did the Classical Greeks feel or remark an analogy between the city and the household family or household, in a general way? Can we find interesting analogies between family and city in some of their practice, experience, or discourse?

One basic analogy between the *oikos* and the *polis*, if you like, is that just like each *oikos*, each *polis* was but one of many similar communities embedded in a much larger society with some complex institutions of its own, including many series of intercity sporting competitions. This sense of a broader community was important for maintaining the peace and resisting non-Greek invasion. The city was not the limit of the Greek idea of community or of kinship beyond the family.

We have noted a close semantic analogy between the ranges of meanings of the terms *polis* and *oikos*: each can mean a community of *residents*, or a core community of *members*, or an area of *land*, or the main *set of buildings* on that land. The parallel physical analogy between city and household may have been vivid in people's daily experience. Many Greek farmers lived within city walls. A farmer would walk out through a door of the house and a gate of the town every morning to go to the fields, and return in the evening through a gate of the town and a door of the house. Most Athenian educators, students, and men in training may have done the same, since the three great complexes for athletic training and practice and eventually also other teaching (the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Cynosarges), were each too large to be sited within the city walls.

In another and more prominent way, Greek civic architecture and ritual practice articulated a metaphorical vision of the city as a household family. The centerpiece of the main Greek family room was the fireplace or *hestia* (ἑστία) for

[16] Aristotle makes this point at *Pol.* 1280b36, using a term sometimes used for marriage straddling different cities. One surviving treaty of merger between two small Ionian cities required that all marriages for a period of six years be mixed: one spouse from Latmos and one from Pidasa: Van Bremen 2003, p.314f.; see also Xenophon's *Hellenica*, 5.2.19.

cooking and heating, associated with Hestia, firstborn of the gods, who received regular offerings there in connection with meals and other rites. Visual representations of Hestia as a goddess were few, suggesting that she was closely identified with the hearth itself—or with the hearth-fire, the hearth being her sacrificial altar.

> "Starting from Hestia" was for Greeks, according to a proverb, the proper way to begin; and in describing an Athenian's religious world it seems natural to do just that—or at least, to start from the unit of which Hestia is the symbol, the individual household (oikos) with its associated cults.[17]

For example, when Euthyphro in the eponymous Platonic dialogue comments that Socrates' accuser seems "to start from Hestia doing ill to the city" (ἀφ᾽ ἑστίας ἄρχεσθαι κακουργεῖν τὴν πόλιν), the note to this Greek line in the Michigan Classical Commentaries says, "To 'begin from the hearth' is to begin from the most basic thing about it and thus to do so 'utterly.' The phrase is proverbial."[18]

For boys at least, the hearth was the site of first becoming a member of the family. About a week after birth, a ceremony at the family's hearth marked a boy's formal acceptance into the family by his father. Perhaps the same was true for girls. The name of the ceremony suggests making a circuit around the hearth.

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[17] Parker 2006, p. 9.

[18] Platter 2019, p. 53, citing a respected reference work for examples of texts to support this reading of the phrase. Regarding a phrase appearing a few lines later in the dialogue, "sharing a hearth (*sunestios*, συνέστιος) and of the same table (*homotrapezos,* ὁμοτράπεζος)," Platter writes,

> Both words suggest the shared experience that characterizes all members of an *oikos*, with different emphases. συνέστιος refers to private religious activities centered around the hearth, itself synecdochic for the entire household (cf. 3a). ὁμοτράπεζος refers more narrowly to the experience of communal eating around the same table. (p. 61)

Similarly, “brides and slaves were formally accepted into the family by being led to or around the hearth.”[19]

A hearth is not a human family member like a father. In that sense, one might be tempted to say, it is impersonal, like an abstraction. But a family too is not a person. My family is not one of my close kin, nor the sum of them and me. Rather, a family is a community, an object of family feeling. Presumably that is the abstraction that the warm nourishing hearth symbolized. A distant ancestor or an ancestral hall can represent a lineage, but a distant ancestor is not specific to a household family and hence cannot symbolize a family.

Hestia was peculiar among gods and goddesses in that in a sense there were almost no distinct public temples for sacrifices to her. Rather, offerings to her preceded and followed all public offerings to other gods. In the words of a Homeric Hymn to Hestia, “Without you mortals could have no feasts. No one can begin, if the first and the last drink of the honey sweet wine is not offered to Hestia.”[20] Associated with this practice was the myth that Hestia, being the firstborn of the original Olympian gods, was also the last to be reborn from her father’s belly.

But there were public sites specifically dedicated to Hestia, central to the city. For in the typical Greek city, the town hall was in essence a civic dining hall, centering on the common hearth, the *koinē hestia* (κοινῆ ἑστία).[21]

For males at least, the city’s hearth was the site of becoming a member of the city. To become a citizen, a young Athenian man would first have to be formally recommended and would have to perform a sacrifice at the common hearth.

One authority reports,

> During the Bronze and early Iron Ages, the sacral power of the domestic hearth was extended to the king’s or chieftain’s hearth as

[19] Mikalson 2009, p. 125.
[20] Cashford 2003, p. 138.
[21] Miller 1978, p. 6 n. 4.

> the symbol of civic continuity and integrity. With the development of the polis, this function was transferred to a communal civic hearth, usually located in the city hall or *prutaneion*. With a few exceptions, state cults of Hestia were conducted in these halls, which often functioned as dining rooms, rather than in separate sanctuaries. The civic hearth was in many ways analogous to the home hearth, for it was here that important guests were brought to receive the city's hospitality. … When a city was founded, the colonists brought cinders from the *prutaneion* in their hometown to light the fires on their new hearths and altars.[22]

Another writes,

> The symbolic centre of the archaic and classical city, as is well known, was the 'common hearth' in the Prytaneum. Public guests, both human and divine, were invited to dine there …; religious processions started from there; magistrates, according to Aristotle, derived their authority to perform sacred functions "from the common hearth."[23]

The entry on "Prytaneum" in the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* begins,

> In general in ancient Greece, each state, city or village possessed its own central hearth and sacred fire, representing the unity and vitality of the community. The fire (cf. at Rome the fire in the temple of Vesta) was kept alight continuously, tended by the king or members of his family (cf. at Rome the Vestal virgins, originally perhaps the daughters of the king). The building in which this fire was kept was the Prytaneum, and the chieftain (the king or prytanis) probably made it his residence. The word Prytanis (plur. *Prytaneis*)

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22 Larson 2007, p. 161.

23 Parker 1996, p. 26.

> is generally applied specially to those who, after the abolition of absolute monarchy, held the chief office in the state. Rulers of this name are found at Rhodes as late as the 1st century B.C. The Prytaneum was regarded as the religious and political centre of the community and was thus the nucleus of all government, and the official "home" of the whole people. When members of the state went forth to found a new colony they took with them a brand from the Prytaneum altar to kindle the new fire in the colony; the fatherless daughters of Aristides, who were regarded as children of the state at Athens, were married from the Prytaneum as from their home; Thucydides informs us (ii. 15) that in the Synoecism of Theseus (see ATHENS) the Prytanea of all the separate communities were joined in the central Prytaneum of Athens as a symbol of the union; foreign ambassadors and citizens who had deserved especially well of the state were entertained in the Prytaneum as public guests.

We have been speaking of analogies between family and city. We may add that family *issues*, and the interaction between family and civic matters, were common themes of public discourse.

Greek cities were full of talk: in the marketplace, gymnasia, and elsewhere. Many cities were governed by talk in the assemblies. It is hard to imagine that family affairs were not prominent in the casual talk of these mostly rather small towns.

As for scripted public language, in Athens just as in the late twentieth-century West, much of the shared cultural attention was on family dramas—plays mainly centering on close family relations—which the community would watch together. Among the regular drama festivals in Athens and its outlying villages, the largest was the City Dionysia. In the fifth century this annual week-long festival would present to the community five new comedies, nine new

tragedies,[24] and three new satyr plays. The festival was a competition aiming to promote literary excellence, with complex judging institutions designed to produce an unbiased ranking of the competitors from best to worst. The theater for the City Dionysia seated 17,000, the audiences included women,[25] and many of the plays circulated in writing. Reading was not prohibitively difficult.

Unlike the family dramas that were long the staple of American television, the Greek plays typically focused on family and polity in relation to each other (at least before the New Comedy). Northrop Frye says of the two most lasting institutionally recognized genres:[26] "Comedy is much concerned with integrating the family and adjusting the family to society as a whole; tragedy is much concerned with breaking up the family and opposing it to the rest of society."[27] Such opposition was felt as tragic, but one should face difficult kinds of truth.

In tragedies the families portrayed were usually the families of leaders of yore. In comedies the families were of ordinary citizens, or sometimes of politicians or other celebrities who might be in attendance. But both kinds of play tended to explore themes of great public moment. Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, famously probes the tragic tension between family duty and state duty, with King Creon, father of Haemon, representing the state. (It is he who speaks in the epigraph to this sketch.) Aristophanes' *Clouds,* a sendup of intellectuals, makes its climactic pivot when the protagonist's son Pheidippides, just home from his training at Socrates' Thinkery, turns from defending the idea of beating his father to defending the idea of beating his mother. Pheidippides does not fear society's condemnation, because he has learned the skill of winning cases at law. The happy ending is that a mob burns down the Thinkery, and the smoke renders Socrates mute.

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[24] Largely from records of these festival competitions we know the names of about 150 ancient Greek tragedians, but the plays of only three survive. We have seven of Aeschylos' 92 plays, seven of Sophocles' 123, and 19 of Euripides' 92 (Finley 1954, p. 9f.).

[25] Henderson 1991, p. 136f.

[26] Not to deny that other people also invented them.

[27] Frye 1957, p. 218.

Litigation was both a very civic and a very public affair, and records of litigation are an important source of our information about family life in ancient Greece.[28] Jury service was one of the main civic offices readily available to most male citizens. In Athens the minimum jury size was 201, randomly selected from the year's pool of registrants. Juries of 501 were not uncommon, and at least once the entire pool of 6,000 served together. (Litigation was standardly limited to a single day.) Written versions of speeches at trial often circulated later, and many survive to this day.

On the one hand, to protect the integrity of the family, Athenian law left it to the family to respond to all but the most serious internal household offenses.[29] Adultery, for example, was not a charge that could be brought in court as crime or even a tort. On the other hand, "the surviving court speeches include many discussions of litigants' behavior toward relatives. Discussions of these norms appear in legal disputes of all sorts."[30]

> The broad approach to relevance in Athenian courts meant discussion of the parties' character and private conduct was common in court speeches and likely influenced court decisions. Litigants regularly criticize their opponents' treatment of family members and rail against their private vices, while of course touting their own virtue. When particular types of arguments such as these are used many times over by different speechwriters in a wide array of cases, we can surmise that these arguments were thought to be persuasive. In this way, the public courts indirectly regulated

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28 For extended discussion, see Hunter 1994, passim. For an example, see Apollodoros' famous prosecution "Against Neaira," where we can observe how deeply family relations and public litigation could be intertwined. It can be read in English at the Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0080:speech=59 .

29 See Lanni 2015, p. 46 n. 57.

30 Lanni 2015, p. 47.

activity within families and households and other "private" conduct.[31]

Regarding political discourse, and returning to the question whether the polis was envisioned on the model of the household family, we may note that in his 1993 monograph on Athenian political culture, *Fathers and Sons in Athens*, Cornell historian Barry Strauss argues that "the pervasive analogy between oikos and polis" was one of the "fundamental structuring principles" of the Athenian state in the Classical period.[32] Of the various family relations, "the father-son tie had a peculiar paradigmatic importance in the ideology of the polis," and was "a powerful multi-valent symbol of authority."[33] Strauss shows in several chapters how Athenian political vocabulary emphasized the father-son relation, and especially how the contemporary political discourse about the vicissitudes of the Peloponnesian War was cast in terms of the father-son relation and the relations among brothers. "A major motif of ancient Greek civilization was the tension between patriarchy and fraternity, or the rule of elders versus the assertiveness and rebellion of youth banded together as brothers."[34]

Strauss writes, "The Athenian family was politicized and … Athenian politics was familized."[35] And indeed it seems only natural that wherever a felt or supposed homology between family and political organization is an important element of popular ideology or culture, there will be influence in both directions, for good or ill. Dining in the town hall means not dining at home.

Conceiving political authority as analogous to family authority need not mean envisioning a king or executive as the parent, the people as his children. There can be other images, perhaps better ones. A city might see itself as ruled paternally by the *law* or by the *male citizenry*.

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31 Lanni 2015, p. 47.
32 Strauss 1993, pp. 21, 214.
33 Strauss 1993, p. 214, 21.
34 Strauss 1993, p. 14.
35 Strauss 1993, p. 12.

> For the same reason that every man in the assembly felt that no other man was his *kyrios* (lord, master, someone holding power or authority), that same man prided himself on being the *kyrios* of other human beings in his own household: that is, the *kyrios* of his slaves, wife, daughters, and sons under the age of eighteen. For the Athenians, there was no contradiction between a political regime in which the common people were lord and master (a *politeia* in which the *demos* was *kyrios*) and a household in which a man was lord and master (*kyrios*) of the women. On the contrary: a man's mastery of his household was considered both to attest to and to mirror the mastery required of an Athenian [male] citizen.[36]

(Recall King Creon's comment about "any man," quoted at the head of the present section.)

Normally at eighteen a young man would become a citizen and enter into a new and higher position in the household, no longer formally subject to his father. Some of the myths canvassed in the previous sketch suggest that the father's household might then have felt a bit confining for the new citizen until he completed the transition and became the head of his own household, by inheriting or departing from the house of his father and mother. Surely in Athens being a proper man was strongly associated with these civic and household roles.[37] Still, Riet van Bremen writes hyperbolically,

> In understanding public-private relations within Classical and Hellenistic Greek cities nothing could be more wrong than to say, as is commonly done, that women belonged to the domestic, or private sphere, and men to the public. It was inherent in Greek society from

[36] Strauss 1993, p. 8. A father was no longer *kyrios* over his son once the latter became a citizen at 18, though they would continue to share a household.

[37] Aristotle asked where and whether a good man is the same as a good citizen--for he himself was not a citizen of the city where he lived and worked.

> early on that there existed a public role for women and for the young.[38]

M. H. Hansen reports that women took public part

> in almost all the rites and festivals of the city-state. There were some cults from which women were excluded, but others in which only women could participate, like the thesmophoria. Most goddesses had female and not male priests in charge of their cults. In religion women were officially recognized as an indispensable element in the community.[39]

Van Bremen quotes a Hellenistic document from one city showing that, in her words, "the wives of the *prytaneis* form a small, female collective, whose position as wives of the city's main body of magistrates gave them a specific part to play alongside the priestess." The example illustrates van Bremen's more general thesis: that (at least in the Hellenistic period, for which our evidence is better than for the Classical period that preceded it) much of the formal public life of Greek cities, especially its ritual, was organized into collectives loosely corresponding to the main family positions in the household—men, women, girls, and young males grouped by key age distinctions, "forming in a certain sense a collective family of citizens."[40]

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[38] Van Bremen 2003, p. 323. Gomme 1925 says rather boldly: "There is, in fact, no literature, no art of any country, in which women are more prominent, more important, more carefully studied and with more interest, than in the tragedy, sculpture, and painting of fifth-century Athens" (p. 4).

[39] Hansen 2006, p. 119. For more on the common activities of women outside the household, see Cohen 1990, pp. 156ff.

[40] Van Bremen 2003, p. 322f. Zhou Yiqun accepts this point and takes it to refer not only to the Hellenistic period (beginning roughly at the deaths of Aristotle and Alexander), but also in significant part to the preceding Classical period (Zhou 2010, p. 12f.).

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