PART SIX

EURIPIDES AND HIS INFLUENCE
Aristotle defines anger, *orgê*, as “a desire, accompanied by pain, for perceived retribution because of a perceived slight that was directed against oneself or those near to one, the slight being uncalled for.” It is easy to see how this definition might be applied to the judicial situation. The judges only need to see the alleged act of injustice that is brought before them as a slight against themselves or against the victim as someone near to themselves in order to be angry and so desire retribution against the accused in the form of a vote for conviction and severe (or “perceived”) punishment. If we take one further step and consider the slight (*oligôria*) as an offense against the democratic principle of equality inasmuch as the victim’s equal status has been lessened, then the judges’ anger could also be considered democratic. The goal of this paper is to determine whether Aristophanes’ *Wasps* can be used as evidence that anger played some role in the Athenian courts and, further, whether that anger worked in a “democratic” way. At first glance, Aristophanes’ *Wasps* seems to fit this model perfectly. It presents a chorus of dicasts and their principal representative Philocleon as strongly motivated by anger. They are also beholden to their champion Cleon, who employs the dicasts and their anger to promote his ostensibly democratic political agenda. But Aristophanes clearly sees this model as a perversion. The dicasts are not justified in their anger, and Cleon is not pursuing a truly democratic agenda but rather hoodwinking the dicasts into attacking innocents.

Recent papers by David Konstan and Douglas Olson have debated the democratic orientation taken by Aristophanes in *Wasps*. Konstan argues that Aristophanes is advocating withdrawal from the democratic courts in favor of the aristocratic household; Olson responds that Aristophanes is actually advocating only a conservative democratic ideology. Konstan’s model may actually work well enough for the aristocratic

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1 Aris. *Rhet.* 2.2.1 1378a 30: Ἑστω δὴ ὀργὴ ὀφεῖς μετὰ λύπης τιμωρίας φανομένης διὰ φανομένην ὀλιγορίαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ, τού ὀλιγορεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος.
2 Konstan 1985.
3 Olson 1996.