
Matthew Christ’s new book follows in the tracks of his earlier one, *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2006). If the two books share a single task it is to complicate our view of the relationship between individual citizens and the collective. They seek to caution readers against espousing a naively optimistic view of Athenian democracy and its influence on citizens’ values. For Christ, Athenians were no more virtuous than we are and probably less so. Their living in history’s most famous radical democratic community did not necessarily translate (at least for some) into any special feeling of solidarity with or obligation to their fellow citizens. While the earlier book highlighted types of ‘bad behaviour’, such as the avoidance of military service or taxes, this book seeks to expose an absence of ‘good behaviour’, such as helping others even if that might be against one’s self-interest, or ‘pure altruism’, as Christ understands it.

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8 On this occasion, Johansen’s reading of the lines has changed somewhat, so that he now translates, ‘Now let this much have been said, that the soul is the principle of the things mentioned and has been defined (hōristai) by these, the capacities of nutrition, perception, the reasoning, and by locomotion’ (p. 52). The verb ὁρισται is now translated ‘defined’, appeal being made to the ‘definitional context of the previous passages’ (p. 53, n. 14), while the ‘things mentioned’ are no longer taken to be the various activities that indicate life, but ‘living beings’, because ‘[t]he alternative ‘principle of these capacities’ is awkward’ (p. 53, n. 15). Of course, if calling the soul a “principle of capacities” seems awkward, that might be reason to avoid taking ‘the nutritive, the perceptive, and the reasoning’ things spoken of here as capacities in a sense that sets them off against activities, especially when the word *dunamis* does not appear in the text.

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The first chapter is a revised version of a previously published article.\(^{10}\) In it Christ argues that although Athenian ideology depicted Athenians as a tight-knit community, even sprung autochthonously from the very soil of Attica, in practice Athenians were not likely to help people who were not part of their social circle. This claim, of course, is difficult to prove. Christ seeks to do this by looking at arenas where we might expect to find ‘altruistic’ helping behaviour, and argues that in fact we see nothing of the kind. The types of behaviour he zeroes in on are helping fellow soldiers, aiding the poor, nursing the sick, intervening in street fights, and helping in litigation. Christ thinks that none of these types of behaviour was likely to benefit someone altruistically, i.e. without a previous relationship or a promise of reciprocal benefit.

The second chapter examines the ideology of citizenship and argues that Athenians were not likely to see their city as an extended family entailing mutual obligations among individuals. Such a utopian image of Athens can be found only in works like Plato’s *Republic* and Isocrates’ *Areopagiticus*. Instead, the more important concept for everyday life was *homonoia*, or ‘concord’, not *erōs* or ‘affection’. The key text for Athens is not Pericles’ ‘Funeral Oration’ but the Demosthenic oration ‘Against Aristogiton’. The concept of *homonoia*, Christ argues, held that ‘Athenians, as free and equal individuals, are meant to live their private lives as they wish without interference or physical threat from others’ (p. 61). As for actually helping, this ideology entailed that it should be directed towards, and expected from, the city as a whole rather than the citizens within it.

The third chapter is a revised version of an earlier article\(^{11}\) which looks at the relationship between individuals and the polis from the perspective of the kinds of obligation the Athenian polis as a whole had towards the citizens rather than the obligations its citizens had towards the polis. The most important form of communal help a citizen could expect from his polis was in the courts. This was the closest that Athens got to the philosophical ideals of Isocrates and Plato. Here and only here ‘the strangers judging the case [became] helping kinsmen’ (p. 104). This was the only time, according to Christ, that calls for help were likely to be answered by individuals with whom a victim did not already have a prior relationship. The answer, of course, came in the form of a favourable jury verdict long after the crime had been committed.

The fourth chapter looks at Athens’ relationship with other cities. Christ takes issue with recent attempts to offer an alternative to a Thucydidean, realist view of Athenian foreign relations. Here too he finds that Athens was not likely to intervene militarily unless it was in the city’s interest to do so. As he notes: ‘It is difficult . . . to find compelling evidence of Athenians “helping the

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