

Foundations of Muslim's Shuracracy

(Part IV)



**Athenian Democracy viewed through the
interpretive lens of Islamic Ethical praxeology**

III. Critics of Athenian Democracy

III.1 Preliminary considerations



The description of Athenian democracy by **Pericles**¹ in part IV of this study brings out the following remarks, seen in juxtaposition with their parallels in Shuracracy;

- 1) Athenian democracy demanded subordination of private life **to public affairs**, understood as the **common good**.

This is in line with ISLAM, once Common General Good is redefined to apply universally to all the **nativists (innate) human beings**.

- 2) 'The public' and 'the private' spheres were **intermingled and not independent**.

This has its parallel in Islam, although from another perspective and Worldview, not necessary in conflict with the Athenian paradigm.

- 3) It **was obligatory for all citizens to participate in the building and promotion of communal life**.

This has its parallel in Islam in conceiving of the Community of communities as a political entity aspiring to live together for the

¹ I am taking my example of Athenian Democracy from the "golden age of Pericles" in the fifth century B.C., for didactical reasons; even though it has become clear since the 1970's that the emphasis has shifted to the much better documented fourth century B.C., the "age of Demosthenes." See Hansen MH. 1999. "The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes: structure, principles and ideology". Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. Xvi, 447 pp. Hansen's survey is no doubt the best handbook available today on Athenian Democracy.

common good of all. It has a cosmopolitan² character, but could be restricted to encompass only communities within one single nation

- 4) The **ecclesia** (or **ekklesia**) (**Greek** *ἐκκλησία*), the principal assembly of *citizens*, **held sovereign power**, to engage in **legislative and judicial functions**.

Here resides the main difference between Shuracracy and Democracy.


In Islam, while factual earthly power belong to the community or the Community of Communities, **Sovereignty per se, belong only to God.**

Thus understood, **Sovereignty** is not vested in monarchs, governments, body politics, or jurisprudence, it resides fully in the **LAW (Shari'a)**, which is derived both from the Koran and from the interpretation and teaching of the Prophet of Islam.

One outstanding character of **Shari'a**, is that it doesn't separate **ethics** from **law**; they go hand in hand as two twin brothers or two faces of the same coin, with the end result that no distinction can be made between what is considered **justifiable jurisprudence** and **religious moral principles**.

In **Shuracracy**, political leaders are expected to exemplify both what is **politically correct** and what is **morally acceptable**³, as was the case historically during the brief period, **not exceeding three decades in all, in the times of the first four Caliphs (11 after.hijra – 35 a.h)**, which still serves as a template and a model, to be reread, reinterpreted, adjusted and tuned to the needs, circumstances, environments, societal exigencies and expectations of prospective shuracrats of all times, before being emulated anew under other forms and guises, while keeping its general principles intact.

It is the guiding principles of Shura that count, not a repeat of the same (même) as in the times of the Caliphs, since the imitation of such model, to the letter, as lived by the

² When the Cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (c. 412–c. 323 BC)  was asked where he came from?, he said; "I am a citizen of the world" (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, bk. 6, chap. 63).

³ Machiavellian's tricheries (of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527)) are made "folle de logis" in Islam.

Caliphs, will not only suffer from countless inextricable inadequacies, but will be impossible to implement in the first place, knowing pertinently from the Koran itself, that the universe, as it unfolds before our eyes, is no more than a materialisation of a running program popping up our daily realities as we see them and live them.

Seen from this angle, **the Assembly** (where Muslims represent a **majority of the citizens**)⁴, though free to engage in normative legislation with other minority citizens for the **civic good** of the **COMMUNITY of communities (COMcom)** as a whole, **it cannot**, under any circumstances, issue neither;

a) decrees opposing the dictates of the **Shari'a**, which serve on one hand as the guiding paradigm for the Muslim legislators *who apprehend the true Good as the one that leads Muslim individuals to live a good life here and after, and expect every Muslim to have a vested interest in submitting completely to the dictates of the Shari'a*.

b) **never impose** their will as a majority on minorities with different religious or civic paradigms.

And one would expect fail safe measures to be provided by the legislators for both constituencies, with the clear understanding that the great problem for **Shari'a** as well as to any **jurisprudence** is to allow freedom for all while enforcing order.

Indeed, Islam considers **alterity** (otherness) structural in any viable society, and offer the universal individual within **Shari'a**, under the **eleventh commandment, of no compulsion in religion**, coupled with the **immanence of free will invested in all humans**, vast opportunities to espouse alternative forms of life as they choose to, no matter how these alternatives may be professed, since this was the intended aim behind human creation in the first place as the following two verse state⁵:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ

⁴ One expect Muslim minorities anywhere to benefit by reciprocity from this frankness.

⁵ Al-Qur'an, (11; 118 - 119) (هود) (Hud)

If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute.

إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةَ رَبِّكَ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: "I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together."

This is why any behaviour contrary to the standards expected from a natural **innate procreating social human being**⁶, is either condemned unequivocally, sodomy is a typical example, or treated medically⁷, biologically⁸ or through operative surgery depending on the cases.

To sum up;

⁶ Hermaphroditism and sex reversal abound among many insects and plants and animals. Earthworms can impregnate or become pregnant—even by themselves—and many narcissistic types apparently prefer self-fertilization. Qua-hogs (thick-shelled clams) are all born males and remain so during the activity of their youth, after which about half of them metamorphose into the passivity of femaleness. Guppies can switch their sex back and forth within seconds...etc. But what is considered natural for these species, is not for humans.

⁷ In the normal course of fetal and embryonic development, certain genetic and hormonal programmed events occur that differentiate the **innate human being** along sexual dimorphic lines compatible with his genotype. From about six to ten weeks, a single gene labelled "SRY" (for **Sex determining Region of the Y**), causes the rudimentary gonads of the male to change to testes. Without the SRY gene, they become ovaries. At about five months, testicular androgens cause the penis and scrotal sacs to develop. Without androgens, the vagina, clitoris, and labia develop. Moreover the brains are also "sexed" dimorphically by the action of fetal testosterone and its by-products, dihydrotestosterone and estrogen, as they interact with the hypothalamus, the limbic system, and the cerebral cortex. These hormonal secretions first sensitize the male brain to the effects of testosterone and later activate the brain to engage in male-typical behavior. Male-female brain differences are particularly striking in areas of the hypothalamus that participate in the regulation of male-typical sexual behavior.

⁸ Sexuality, according to our present knowledge is the product of sex chromosomes passed on by our parents. Since females have only X sex chromosomes, **innate humans** can receive only an X from the mothers. But he can receive either an X or a Y from his fathers because males carry both kinds. If he gets two Xs, he becomes an XX genotypical female, while if he gets an X and a Y, he becomes an XY genotypical males. It is the Y chromosome that determines human sex. Accidents, as in anything human do happen and sometimes children are born with several X chromosomes, such as the XXX, XXY patterns, and even an XXXXY pattern is known. But no matter how many X "units" of femaleness the foetus has, the presence of a single Y results in the male pattern of sexual differentiation. Individuals with the extra Xs are classified as having **Klinefelter syndrome**. The single exception to this male differentiation by possessors of a Y chromosome is the XY genotype with **androgen-insensitivity syndrome**. The androgen-insensitivity syndrome is an X-linked recessive **syndrome** that causes an XY genetic male to develop as a phenotypical female. In all these three malfunctions the name **syndrome** sums it all to signify that something terrible has happened to the biological program of our **innate viable human being**.

a) **Homosexuality and lesbianism**, are understood in Islam as **volitional⁹ corrupt inversions of human nature** resulting from societal corrupt environment, as was the case for the people of **the Prophet Lot**, 38 centuries ago, mentioned in both the Bible and the Koran, who were utterly destroyed.

b) **Abnormal Genetic Development**; due to some disruptive hormonal or biological factors. The later case being directed to specialists in these fields to correct their hormonal or their biological dysfunctions in order to find the appropriate cures¹⁰.

Notice that this monistic conception of **the Good in Islam** as defined in the Koran, while demanding total commitment from every Muslims to the Islamic ideals, **doesn't impose this choice on others**.

Moreover, the Islamic Societal Paradigm, allow these others to create a state of their own within the state, if so are their wishes and desires, or even separate themselves completely from the **COMcom** if the later doesn't satisfy them or doesn't appeal to them, a case of legitimate self-determination called for by the eleventh amendment.

Suffice to say that **the Ottomans, who were not even Shuracrats themselves**, as countless of dynasties, all professing Islam, who reigned before them, were able nonetheless to develop, guided by the eleventh commandment, a viable traditional pluralism encompassing a multitude of ethnic, linguistic as well as religious minorities¹¹.

⁹ i.e., a conscious choice..

¹⁰ Suffice to mention here, among many other factors at play in conceiving a viable multi-programmed innate human being, that the substances (androgens and Müllerian Inhibiting Substance (MIS)) secreted by the testes are vital in diverting the foetus from the basic human female form. Without testes and the substances they secrete, a foetus will invariably be a female. Innate individuals with a single X chromosome (XO) are known as **Turner's syndrome girls**. This condition is typically caused by an X-bearing sperm penetrating a sex chromosome-empty egg. **A Turner's syndrome child is unmistakably female** (often exaggeratedly so) in her behavioral and intellectual patterns, is very short (about 4' 8"), lacks secondary sex characteristics, and is infertile. Although the Turner's syndrome child usually has a normal verbal IQ, she is significantly below population norms on performance (visual-spatial) IQ, which is reflective of low androgen levels. A disastrous accidental alteration with disastrous behavioral consequences.



¹¹ The **Ottoman Empire** lasted for six hundred years (1299-1923) and encompassed what is modern day **Turkey, the Balkans and all of the Arab speaking nation states**. It was home to an extremely diverse population ranging from the Muslim majority to the minority population, specifically Christians and Jews who were referred to as the **People of the Book**.

The Ottoman Sultan, rather than having one of the Sultan's close relatives being granted the position of Vizir a slave was given this position, implying that **the minority population of the Empire was successfully assimilated with little or no force required**. Even more the minority populations of the Empire were insured certain rights as long as those rights did not conflict with a Muslim who constituted as part of the majority population.

The integration of minorities into **the Ottoman Empire** such as **Jews and Christians into every level of society i.e. military, government, business and etc** allowed a sense of unity to a certain extent and allowed the most qualified individuals to contribute his part for the Empire.


5) **Ethical Virtues** in Periclean's view is that '**the virtue of the individual**, living in and through the *polis*, and the virtue of the **citizen should be identical**'.


This was the forerunner of what has become; "**Civic Virtues**".

Athenians recognised four virtues considered as personal traits and qualities of high standard and ethics, namely; **Temperance**: σωφροσύνη (*sōphrosynē*), **Prudence**: φρόνησις (*phronēsis*), **Fortitude** : ἀνδρεία (*andreia*) and **Justice**: δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosynē*), which go back to **Socrates** (**Greek**: Σωκράτης) (c. 470 BC–399 BC)



, and were also reflected in the work of his pupil **Plato** (**Greek**: Πλάτων)

(428/427 BC – 348/347 BC)  and the pupil of the later; **Aristotle** (**Greek**:

Ἀριστοτέλης) (384 BC – 322 BC) , as four cardinal virtues.

Aristotle in his Book IV of "The Politics" gave his advices for what he considered as the proper conduct of a virtuous citizen!;

"The citizens must not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen, for such a life is ignoble!!!!, and inimical to virtue!!!!. Neither must they be farmers, since leisure is necessary both for the development of virtue and the performance of political duties."

Needless to say that these virtues are tuned to the preference of those who consider them as such, while others may disagree, having other preferences of their own, while the source of Islamic virtues are the Koran and the conduct of the Prophet of Islam.

6) Citizenship, required **direct participation in the affairs of the state**.

In Islam this participation is best exemplified by the following encompassing verses¹²;

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفُرُونَ

Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, when they are

*In respect to the Jewish population within the Empire they were integrated into the financial market in conjunction with some Christians from Syria who were used for trade and whose knowledge of the rough terrain was useful. **Ultimately the successful assimilation of the Empire's minorities into Ottoman society helped the Empire to flourish with the Muslims in firm control.** {from Wikipedia; "Social Structure of the Ottoman Empire"*

¹² Al-Qur'an, (42; 37-43) (Ash-Shura) (الشورى) {Council, Consultation}.

angry even then forgive;

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

*Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) **their affairs by mutual Consultation (Shura)**; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;*

وَلَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ

And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.

وَلَمَنْ آتَتْكُمْ بَعْدَ ظِلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ

But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such there is no cause of blame.

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

*The blame is only against those who oppress men and wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, **defying right and justice**: for such there will be a penalty grievous.*

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.

This is what Muslims understand by virtuous citizenship in a tolerant Virtuous society and try their best to emulate.

- 7) The citizen had *public rights* that were not attributes of private individuals, and had *obligations* that were not enforced by a state dedicated to the maintenance of a

framework to protect the private ends of individuals¹³

And so it is with Islam, but under another Worldview and societal paradigm.

8) Athenian conception of direct democracy, required a lot of people to implement it, and was possible, *only because the economy was dependant on slavery*, giving plenty of time for the lucky few citizens to consecrate the necessary time for such activities.

Slavery was a fact of life before Islam and afterwards on account of the prevailing protracted wars between nations.

But in contrast with Greek slaves, who generally became *metics*; i.e.; resident aliens, non-citizens in the city where they lived, upon being set free by their masters (manumitted), **Islam** highly recommended the freeing of slaves as a charitable act.

The freeing of slaves was recommended both for *the expiation of sins* and as *an act of simple benevolence*. It exhorted masters to either free their slaves or allow slaves to earn or purchase their own freedom through *manumission contracts*.

Ideally, if the precepts and injunctions of Islam were kept concerning slavery, the later practice would have disappeared entirely from society during the first generations of Muslims, with the so many avenues open for prisoners of war to be set free.

The fact that the practice lingered is to be imputed to many compelling factors, among which, lack of shuracracy is to be cited first.

9) All citizens met to debate on issues and decided together for enacting a law.

Islam, is neutral concerning the procedures and is more concerned with the ends sought. The fact that laws were decided on the force of the better argument, not on mere habit, custom, or brute force, was a strong point of this democracy.

10) The law of the state was the citizens' law and everyone was considered equal before the law,

¹³ Sabine, G. H. (1963(1937)). *A History of Political Theory*. London, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., pp. 16-17

The Law of the state in Islam is shari'a and everyone is considered also equal before the law,

- 11) The Law is contrasted with tyranny, implying that the notions of the rule of law, *found their earliest expression in the politics of the Athenian city-state*¹⁴.

In Islam the Law of the Shari'a is contrasted with the law of ignorance, as the following verse indicates¹⁵;

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

Do they then seek after a judgment of (the days of) ignorance? But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than Allah?

- 12) Athenians demos acknowledged the existence of differences in ability and merit among citizens, *and recognized that not everybody had the ability, to command and lead the army or navy.*

Islam, while emphasizing these differences, and advocates the principle that; those able to handle things, should be given the opportunity to prove themselves, acknowledges also the dangers that may be lurking behind if one's motives were not pure.

- 13) The demos apprehended that **common good** could be achieved through independence, education, art, religion and participation in the communion life of the city, *and this what "Justice" with a capital "J" meant to them!*

Aristotle's celebrated account of justice in Book III of his *Ethics* tackled one aspect of its large spectrum when he said;

No distinction ought to be made between men who are equal in all respects relevant to the kind of treatment in question, even though in other (irrelevant) respects they may be unequal. On the other hand, in any matter in

¹⁴ Sabine, G. H., 1963; "A History of Political Theory", London, Harrap, p. 18.

¹⁵ Al-Qur'an, (5; 50) (Al-Ma'eda) (المائدة) {The Table, The Table Spread}

which they are in relevant respects unequal, they ought to be treated in proportion to their relevant inequalities.

The Idea of Justice is capital in Islam and occupies central stage in societal building, and goes far beyond anything imagined by political or philosophical thinkers in Western cultures.

Suffice it to say at the outset; that there is a consensus among knowledgeable Muslims that a **judicial system** must be established for the **Community of Muslims, or the Community of the communities** based on many Koran's injunctions as in the following verse¹⁶;

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَالِلَّهِ أُولَىٰ بَٰئِهِنَّمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلَوُّوا أَوْ تُعْرَضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا.

O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

And also¹⁷;

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفِثَتْ فِيهِ عَمَّ الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ

And remember David and Solomon, when they gave judgment in the matter of the field into which the sheep of certain people had strayed by night: We did witness their judgment.

فَقَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا

To Solomon We inspired the (right) understanding of the matter: to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge

And also addressing the Prophet of Islam¹⁸;

وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

If thou judge, judge in equity between them. For Allah loveth those who judge in equity.

.....etc.

¹⁶ Al-Qur'an, (4; 135) (An-Nisa) (النساء) {Women}

¹⁷ Al-Qur'an, (21; 78-79) (Al-Anbiya) (الأنبياء) {The Prophets}.

¹⁸ Al-Qur'an, (5; 42) (Al-Ma'eda) (المائدة) {The Table, The Table Spread}

- 14) The administration of law in democratic Athens was in the hands of **the People's Courts**, where more than 200 juries listened to oral arguments made by litigants in both civil and criminal cases, and voted on the result.

Concerning the Judiciary in Islam, There is a consensus that nominations of judges are an obligation that must be carried out by society, with the derogation that; if some members of society carry out this duty, it is sufficient for everyone. but If, on the other hand, everyone neglects it, then everyone in society is blameable and Muslims specially are sinful.

- 15) **Athenians were not only reluctant to extend privileges of citizenship to women, old foreign residents and slaves, but also to Greeks of mixed Blood, and they passed the *Periclean Citizenship Law* (451/450 B.C.) reserving this right only to children born of two Athenian citizens.**

This is to be contrasted with Islam, preaching cosmopolitanism and espousing the unity of mankind irrespective of color, creed,...etc. being all the pedigree of one Man and one Woman.

- 16) The political egalitarianism of Pericles' **Athens**, as we got a glimpse of it in **Pericles' Funeral Oration** reported by Thucydides¹⁹, was concerned only with **the equality of Athenian citizens** and excluded slaves and foreigners.

*The Egalitarian nature of Islam derives from its precepts concerning **humanity**²⁰.*

- 17) implementing the Athenian type of democracy called for;
- Small city - state with agricultural surrounding area,
 - Slave economy creating plenty of 'free' time for citizens,
 - Domestic service, by women labour, freeing men for public

¹⁹ *Pericles' Funeral Oration, in Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, pp.145,147*

²⁰ *The first egalitarians of Greece were no doubt; the Stoics. They considered all men as rational beings with an equal capacity for virtue. For them: "Virtue closes the door to no man; it is open to all ... the freeborn, the freedman, the slave and the king ... neither family nor fortune determines its choice—it is satisfied with the naked human"*

duties,

- d) Restriction of citizenship to only relatively small numbers not exceeding 2 % of the total population.

It goes without saying, that the Athenian governmental system, due to the above restrictions, could not serve as a model for big cities (*mega polis*) with extended and diversely mixed ethnic and religious populations, as was the case centuries before in ancient Mesopotamia (*Babylon for example*), or in our present-day modern industrialized nations.

Islam, being global and universal by its very nature, is neutral concerning such issues and it is up to society to find out what best is suited for its welfare depending on its surrounding setting and juncture of history.

- 18) Solon's Reform making the allegiance of citizens to their clans, was a real handicap for good governance. Cleisthenes on becoming chief magistrate inherited this thorny problem and one of his achievements was the breaking of such **loyalties to blood**, by dividing the 139 demes²¹ (*pre-existing villages or city neighbourhoods*) into three regions: **city, coast, and inland, transferring by this trick allegiance from blood to geography**²². This is typical instance of an engineered "**imagined political community**" of citizens, which worked as planned.

The inter-mixing of men from different villages, and different geographic regions, along with strong social incentives such as; useful contacts and public honors served to break down the insular spirit of the tribesmen and their local established strong ties.

A Muslim Jurist would have handled such issue from first principles, imploring the religious obligation of tribes to forget their cleavages and work for the common good, by trying to know each others.

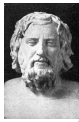
²¹ *natural divisions of Attica*

²² *The demes were aggregated into ten new artificial tribes and each tribe drew about a third of its membership from demes located in coastal, inland, and urbanized regions of Athenian territory.*

These remarks as well as the parallels we made with Shuracracy will be incomplete without considering what other Greeks thought of Athenian Democracy, before we start on task of trying to harmonizing this model with the more general **Societal Islamic Paradigm** (SIP) with the aim of forming a viable hypothetical working **Global Societal System** (GSS) as explained in part I of this study.

III.2 Western critics of Athenian Democracy

The Athenian legacy, a political achievement in its own right, given its historical juncture and brief existence was, by no means accepted uncritically by Greek thinkers among whom we find; *Xenophon* (Greek *Ξενοφῶν*, (ca. 431 – 355



BC), son of Gryllus, *Pseudo-Xenophon*²³, also known as; “*Old Oligarch*²⁴”, *Thucydides* (Greek *Θουκυδίδης*, Thoukudídēs) (c.460--399 BC)



, the dramatist; *Aristophanes* (Greek: *Αριστοφάνης*), (ca. 456 BC – ca. 386 BC),



son of Philippus, Plato (c.427-347 BC) and Aristotle (c. 384-322 BC).

Much of what is known today about **Athenian Democracy** and the limitations of its model of democracy in theory as well as in practice is due to these early contemporary critics.

The first critic of Athenian Democracy we know of is “**Old Oligarsh**”²⁵.

²³ *Most of the manuscripts of the shorter works of Xenophon include a hostile treatise about the Athenian Constitution. The author appears to be an Athenian who regards the Athenian democracy with dismay. {From Constitution of the Athenians, Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia}*

²⁴ *Evidence against Xenophon's authorship was presented in the early twentieth century, and has become widely accepted. The author is now usually called pseudo-Xenophon, or the Old Oligarch, based on the anti-democratic tone of the work.*

²⁵ *The date of the treatise is not known. It seems from internal evidence that the “Old Oligarch”, presumably wrote before 424 BC.*

This forerunner of *critics* of popular rule viewed in Athenian democracy no more than a simple and crude manifestation of brutal and harsh majoritarianism.

The following is an excerpt from his book²⁶;

1. And as for the fact that the **Athenians** have chosen the kind of constitution that they have, I do not think well of their doing this inasmuch as in making their choice they have chosen to let the **worst people be better off than the good**. Therefore, on this account I do not think well of their constitution. But since they have decided to have it so, I intend to point out how well they preserve their constitution and accomplish those other things **for which the rest of the Greeks criticize them**.

2. First I want to say this: there the poor and the people generally are right to have more than the highborn and wealthy for the reason that it is the people who man the ships and impart strength to the city; the steersmen, the boatswains, the sub-boatswains, the look-out officers, and the shipwrights -- these are the ones who impart strength to the city far more than the hoplites, the high-born, and the good men. This being the case, **it seems right for everyone to have a share in the magistracies, both allotted and elective, for anyone to be able to speak his mind if he wants to**.

2.17 **Nor should democracies be very good at implementing strategic plans or carrying out field operations**. Democratic culture blurs the principal-agent relation between policymakers and military services and between military commanders and their troops the field. **Democracy undercuts the hierarchical system of command and control on which military success is thought to depend**.

3. Then there are those magistracies which bring safety or danger to the people as a whole depending on whether or not they are well managed: of these the people claim no share (*they do not think they should have an allotted share in the generalships or cavalry commands*). For these people realize that there is more to be gained from their not holding these magistracies but leaving them instead in the hands of the most influential men. **However, such magistracies as are salaried and domestically profitable the people are keen to hold**.

4. Then there is a point which some find extraordinary, **that they everywhere assign more to the worst persons, to the poor, and to the popular types than to the good men: in this very point they will be found manifestly preserving their democracy**. For the poor, the popular, and the base, inasmuch as they are well off and the likes of them are numerous, will increase the democracy; but if the wealthy, good men are well off, the men of the people create a strong opposition to themselves.

5. **And everywhere on earth the best element is opposed to democracy**. For among the best people there is minimal wantonness and injustice but a maximum of scrupulous care for what is good, whereas among the people there is a maximum of ignorance, disorder, and wickedness; for poverty draws them rather to disgraceful actions, and because of a lack of money some men are uneducated and ignorant.

It is evident that Old Oligarch, as he confessed above, doesn't **think well of their constitution!**

²⁶ *Old Oligarch, Constitution of the Athenians* (ed. E. C. Marchant)

Aristophanes in his post-war comedy; “*The Assembly-Women*” presented his Athenian audience with an effective cameo.

In the play, women have taken over the city and passed legislation commanding that all movable properties are to be brought to a communal storehouse and that citizens from now on will dine at public expense from these communal stores.

The scene opens on a citizen collecting his household commodities and preparing to transport them to the common store in compliance with the new law. As he was busying himself with this task, a sceptical citizen tells him that it is foolish to cooperate with the new rules.

This second citizen contended that he will not transport his own commodities, “until he sees first everyone else bringing *theirs*.” In the ensuing dispute, we see the accommodating citizen continuing to uphold his intention to obey the law, while the sceptic proposes various scenarios by which he might be able to share the common dinner without contributing anything at all.

This dramatic scene pinned **post-war Democratic Athens** down on the issue of the immoral behaviour of the demos.

But if dramatist **Aristophanes'** plays were political, and often satirized well-known citizens of Athens exposing their conducts, especially in the Peloponnesian War and after, the Historian **Thucydides** was more concerned in his critical analysis with power and conflict, even though both **Thucydides** and **Aristophanes** emphasized ways in which democratic culture stimulated an unhealthy desire for excessive consumption and possession²⁷

Plato's critique on the other hand was, to say the least, shrewd to the extremes and out of the ordinary.

²⁷ Balot RK. 2001. *Greed and injustice in classical Athens*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. X, 291 pp.

He characterised democracy by the single-minded **pursuit of freedom** at the expense of **other goods**, with three unrestricted **excesses**;

- a) **Unbound popular liberty**,
- b) **Slaves - male and female - enjoying the same liberty as their masters!**,
- c) **Absolute equality and liberty in the relations between the sexes!**


Or in his words, speaking through his teacher Socrates²⁸;


Then in democracy, I went on, 'there's no compulsion either to exercise authority if you are capable of it, or to submit to authority if you don't want to; you needn't fight if there's a war, or you can wage a private war in peacetime if you don't like peace; and if there's any law that debars you from political or judicial office, you will none the less take either if they come your way. It's a wonderfully pleasant way of carrying on in the short run, isn't it?

'In the short run perhaps.'

'And isn't there something rather charming about the good temper of those who've been sentenced in court?'

You must have noticed that in a democracy men sentenced to death or exile stay on, none the less, and go about among their fellows, with no more notice taken of their comings and goings than if they were invisible spirits.

Dr. Julia Annas  , Regents Professor of Philosophy at the University of Arizona, has this to say concerning this Plato's depiction Athenian Democracy, in




her book; "*An Introduction to Plato's Republic*"  ²⁹;

Plato presents democracy as defined by tolerant pluralism, **but Athens was a populist democracy**, with a clearly defined way of life separating those with power from those without, **and about as tolerant of openly expressed nonconformity as McCarthyite America**³⁰. Plato knew that

²⁸ *The Republic*, (557e-558a)

²⁹ Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 300.

³⁰ **McCarthyism** is the term describing a period of intense anti-Communist suspicion in the United States that lasted roughly from the late 1940s to the late 1950s. This period is also referred to as the Second Red Scare, and coincided with increased fears about Communist influence on American institutions and espionage by Soviet agents. Originally coined to criticize the actions of U.S. Senator

Athenians were not free to disobey the law (Socrates could hardly ignore his death sentence!); that Athens was one of the worst cities in the Greek world as far as concerned equal freedoms for men and women. (563b is absurd if Athens is in view); and that not only were foreigners like **Protagoras** (485 – 410 BC)  and **Anaxagoras** (ca. 500 BC–428 BC)  driven out for expressing unpopular views, but even citizens who, like **Euripides** (480-406 B.C.) , publicly held unorthodox opinions **had life made so miserable for them by public vilification that they often left Athens to escape the pressures**

Plato describes in his; “Republic” four forms of unjust state, and choose **timocracy** as the closest to his ideal society and the preferable one of all the four practices.

The Model city-state for **Plato** was the totalitarian (one-party state) exemplified by **Sparta**, the **honor-oriented timocracy**, and not the **democracy of Athena**.

He introduced in his **Book two** of “The Republic” the division of labour to justify **the need for a professional ruling class**. He based this choice on what some refer to as the "**founding myth**" of his Republic.

This founding myth asserts that **God** has introduced different metals into the natures of people, separating them into four classes of men;

- a) **Men of gold; the Guardians**, the "perfect" men and women of intellect and wisdom who have a "vision of the Good" to deserve the longest education. (Book III, 386a-412b)
- b) **Men of silver; the Auxiliaries**, i.e.; the police and the army, who need to stick to one trade, that of skill in weapons.

Joseph McCarthy, "McCarthyism" later took on a more general meaning, not necessarily referring to the conduct of Joseph McCarthy alone.

During this time many thousands of Americans were accused of being Communists or communist sympathizers and became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning before government or private-industry panels, committees and agencies {McCarthyism From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia }

c) **Men of bronze; the craftsmen**, traders and other professionals.

d) **Men of iron; the laborers**, or the people who do the dirty work,

In Book three, Plato, emphasises that education is of utmost importance and should be under the control of **the Guardians of the state!**

This of course, transforms education into pure indoctrination

In Book 5 of his “Republic”, Plato argues;

That spouses and children are to be held in common (in his monstrous bad city) and that sexual relations of the Guardians will take place, as for animals, only during certain fixed periods of the year, designated as festivals.


Pairings of couples was to be determined by lot, and Guardians, with the most desired qualities may have up to five women to copulate with during these festivals.

Children of these mating festivals are taken from their parents and raised together, to make sure no one knows which children descend from which adults. Sex is not permitted after these festivals and if any guardians indulge in sex beyond the festivals and a child results, that child is to be killed!

Children would be raised to pay respect for all adults of a certain generation as mothers and fathers, or in Plato’s words placed in the mouth of Socrates;

Hymeneal festivals will be celebrated at times fixed with an eye to population, and the brides and bridegrooms will meet at them; and by an ingenious system of lots the rulers will contrive that the brave and the fair come together, and that those of inferior breed are paired with inferiors—the latter will ascribe to chance what is really the invention of the rulers. And when children are born, the offspring of the brave and fair will be carried to an enclosure in a certain part of the city, and there attended by suitable nurses; the rest will be hurried away to places unknown. The mothers will be brought to the fold and will suckle the children; care however must be taken that none of them recognise their own offspring; and if necessary other nurses may also be hired. The trouble of watching and getting up at night will be transferred to attendants. ‘Then the wives of our guardians will have a fine easy time when they are having children.’ And quite right too, I said, that they should.

Plato's critic of Athenian Democracy is not free of prejudice, if we bear in mind the following two facts;

- a) Plato was of noble birth, whose youth was passed in the turmoil of the Peloponnesian War, and whose mentor; Socrates was put to death by the friends of democracy and whose uncle **Charmides** was one of the **Thirty Tyrants** (Greek: 30 τύραννοι), who were pro-Spartan oligarchy installed in Athens after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War in April 404 BC.
- b) Many of his regulations in his "**Republic**", as Benjamin Jowett  (1817 – 1893) noticed³¹, **are characteristically Spartan**; such as the prohibition of gold and silver, the common meals of the men, the military training of the youth, and the gymnastic exercises of the women. ...

But, In spite of this background, he was correct in stating that;

Democracy possesses an inherent weakness in that it has the potential to collapse into tyranny.

Concerning **Aristotle criticism of Democracy**, one has to bear in mind three things;

- a) Aristotle criticised Athenian democracy in his two books; "**The Politics**" and "**Nicomachean Ethics**".
- b) He's thoughts are entirely dominated by those of his teacher **Plato**. The blue print is always Plato's and Aristotle followed his mentor, as closely as he can, though reluctantly at times.
- c) Aristotle considers democracy as inferior to either **monarchy** or **aristocracy**..

He writes in "The Politics"³²,

For two principles are characteristic of democracy, the government of the

³¹ *The Republic, by Plato (introduction5) translated by Benjamin Jowett.*

³² *Politics, Book 5, part IX, translated by Benjamin Jowett,*

majority and freedom. Men think that what is just is equal; and that equality is the supremacy of the popular will; and that freedom means the doing what a man likes.

In such democracies every one lives as he pleases!, or in the words of Euripides, 'according to his fancy.' But this is all wrong; men should not think it slavery to live according to the rule of the constitution; for it is their salvation.

So for Aristotle; Democracy is a '**transgression**' of good government.

He writes in **Nicomachean Ethics**³³, Book 8, Chapter 10;

There are three kinds of constitution, and an equal number of deviation-forms--perversions, as it were, of them. The constitutions are; monarchy, aristocracy, and thirdly that which is based on a property qualification, which it seems appropriate to call timocratic, though most people are wont to call it polity.....

Democracy is found chiefly in **masterless dwellings** (for here every one is on an equality), and in those in which **the ruler is weak and every one has licence to do as he pleases.**

Here, Aristotle is making a parallel between the three basic kinds of political constitution (**monarchy**, **aristocracy**, and **timocracy**) and their respective **perversions** (**tyranny**, **oligarchy**, and **democracy**), and asserts unequivocally that; "the best of these is monarchy, and the worst is **timocracy**".

For Aristotle; **Democracy** and its perversion, **timocracy**, are both characterized by;

- a) **the rule of the majority**, and
- b) **all who have the property qualification** count as equals.

The strong argument in Aristotle's critical assessment is that;

Athens exemplified a corrupted version of timocracy, falsely described as democracy, and that equality in Athenian Democracy was limited strictly to free, propertied males and was associated with disorder, weak rule, and the license for expediency.

One must also realise;

³³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, Chapter 10. Translated by W. D. Ross

- a) That this democracy was short lived and lasted only for a half century (from 450 to 400 B.C.).
- b) This golden age of Athena came fortuitly on the wake of its military victories over the Persians, and having the luck of been relatively free from outside threats during this short lapse of time.
- c) Athenians demos, as we have seen, assume some degree of equality between **free and propertied autochthonous males only** and excluded women, slaves, freed slaves, and anyone not born in Athens, even though the slave population counted for nearly one third of the population³⁴.

Needless to say, from an Islamic Paradigmatic perspective, when Justice and Justice alone is used as the objective yardstick to judge the merits of good and efficient governance, that all the following forms of governances;

a) aristocracy/oligarchy (rule by the few) having a monopoly on the government by virtue of their birth, as was the case in Athens before Solon's Reform, or

b) Timocracy³⁵, the pet project of Solon's Reform which merely replaced the hereditary aristocracy with one based on wealth, and

c) monarchy/tyranny (rule by one),

are altogether incompatible with Shuracracy.

End

To be followed by Part V

³⁴ Several America's Founding Fathers of late, who took their model from Athenian Demos and professed to be great democrats, have being slave owners themselves, as Athenian demos were 23 centuries later!

³⁵ In which civic honour or political power increases with the amount of property one owns.

On Harmonizing the Athenian Model of Democracy with the Muslims' *Societal Islamic Paradigm* (SIP).