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The Streets of Thurii: Discourse, Democracy, and Design in the Classical Polis

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THE STREETS OF THURII:
DISCOURSE, DEMOCRACY, AND DESIGN IN THE CLASSICAL POLIS

Abstract. The Greek colony of Thurii, founded in southern Italy around 444, BCE, was apparently planned to be a model polis. Any reconstruction of that plan must be speculative, but the stories about Thurii suggest that its design incorporated three entities not usually linked – a democratic constitution, an orthogonal street layout, and a rhetorically-oriented educational system. In trying to understand what these things might have had to do with one another, I examine the thought of three individuals who, sources tell us, participated in the colony: the rhētor Pericles, who apparently instigated the project; the designer Hippodamus, who supposedly laid out its streets; and the sophist Protagoras, who reportedly wrote its laws. If indeed these three collaborated on Thurii, what they may have sought there was a “bounded” democracy, a community of free and equal citizens, governed by open, transparent, and agonistic means but guided by an unmistakable sense of rightness, something manifest not only in the town’s constitution but in its educational system and built space as well.

Sometime around the year 444 BCE, Greek settlers founded a city in southern Italy at a place where two rivers flowed close together into the Gulf of Tarentum. Nearby were the ruins of Sybaris, a city founded some three hundred years earlier by Achaeans and Troezenians but destroyed in 510 BCE by a neighboring state, Croton, its inhabitants either killed or exiled to other poleis. Sixty-five years later, after several failed attempts by former residents (or their descendants) to rebuild Sybaris, Athens accepted an invitation to lead a panhellenic colonizing project nearby. The new city was called Thurii after a spring where its founders settled.²

Much about Thurii remains shrouded in mystery; and the evidence regarding it, both archaeological and literary, is sketchy at best. My concern here, however, is not so much the facts surrounding the town as the idea behind it, the vision of a good society that seems to have motivated it. Although it is probably misleading to describe the expedition of 444 as “an attempt to implement a utopia” (Malkin 98), the town does appear to have been planned as a kind of model polis and is usually so described by modern scholars (see, e.g., De Romilly 166; Hammond 314; Morris, “Greek” 27; Muir 18; Owens 57; Schiappa 179; and Ward-Perkins 16). Any reconstruc-
tion of that plan must be highly speculative, but the stories about Thurii sug-
est that its design incorporated three entities not usually linked – a demo-
cratic constitution, an orthogonal street layout, and a rhetorically-oriented
educational system. My goal here is to try to understand what these things
might have had to do with one another.

I will focus on the ideas of three individuals who, sources tell us, had a
hand in the design of Thurii, each a leading figure in the fifth century Greek
Enlightenment: the rhêtor and strategos Pericles, who helped usher in the
direct democracy of Athens and who apparently instigated the Thurii project;
the designer Hippodamus, traditionally credited with the invention of orthogo-
nal town planning and supposedly the man who laid out the streets of the
new city; and the sophist Protagoras, who advocated a new kind of civic
education centered on language, literacy, and debate and who reportedly wrote
the colony’s laws.

It will be my argument that these three shared an image of the good
society and based their design of Thurii on it. What they sought, I believe,
was an autonomous community of free and equal citizens who would govern
themselves through their own practical, human capabilities – that is, through
speaking, writing, and debating with one another. The community would
not, however, be completely unhinged from traditional sources of order: if at
its center was a place devoted to free and open talk, that place would none-
theless be ringed in by reason, reverence, and history. In other words, Thurii
was to be a city free from both external and internal tyrannies, but it was also
to be guided by an unmistakable sense of rightness, something manifest not
only in the crafting of its constitution but also in the formation of its educa-
tional system and the design of its built space.

1. APOIKIA

There are several reasons why the ancient Greeks planned and built so
many cities: Miletus, for example, was rebuilt after being destroyed by the
Persians, and Alexandria was founded in honor of a conqueror’s military
victories. Greek town planning also received a boost from both synoecism,
the process whereby villages close to one another consolidated into a single
polis, and the historical shift in the political center of the Greek state, from
the archaic citadel (acropolis) to the classical marketplace (agora). But per-
haps the most important impetus for town planning among the ancient Greeks
was colonization: the founding of new cities in “vacant” territory.

The great age of Greek colonization was the period between about 750
and 550 BCE. This was a time of transition between what we now know of
as the dark ages and the classical era, a period ushered in by what Grant has
called “the eighth century revolution,” when the Greeks experienced pro-
found changes in their way of life: an increase in commercial activity and
trading; expanded contact with the East and new exploration in the West; the emergence of the phalanx on the battlefield and the rise of a middle class at home; the growth of independent and increasingly democratic city-states; and various cultural and intellectual developments, including the introduction of alphabetic script and the gradual rise in literacy, the standardization and diffusion of the epics, the emergence of panhellenic religious festivals and games, the development of new artistic styles, and the growth of scientific thought.

But why, during this period, did so many Greeks leave their towns to settle in new ones? Mostly, it seems, because of a scarcity of arable land in the mother cities (metropoleis) due to both overpopulation and Greek inheritance patterns, which saw family estates divided each generation into smaller and smaller plots. They also emigrated, apparently, for commercial and military reasons (that is, to set up trading posts, exploit natural resources, control strategically-placed harbors, establish way stations for troops, and celebrate victories in war). Individuals may also have left home to secure social advancement abroad or flee political unrest. And, finally, the Greeks, as a people, apparently liked to build cities, seeing the relatively small, self-sufficient, and autonomous polis as the most desirable and most characteristically human kind of social environment.

Which is why we should resist the temptation to see the Greek colony as a derivative phenomenon. For one thing, the English word “colony” is probably a misleading translation of the Greek apoikia, which seems to have designated a more independent community than our word connotes. For another, although the standard view makes colonization dependent on the rise of the polis, some have argued that, as a social and political abstraction, the polis may have been a product of colonization. According to Malkin:

> The need implied in colonization to create a society ex novo required conceptualizing what the social unit was and what the ideal type should be. Colonization, while creating new poleis, provided also the opportunity for refining and defining the polis both in practice and in theory . . . In short, it is our opinion that colonization contributed just as much towards the rise of the polis as it was dependent on this ‘rise’ for its own existence. (263) (See also Hansen, “Poleis” 15.)

The activity of founding new cities, in other words, was less an effect of political self-consciousness than its very cause.

What exactly did founding a city involve for the Greeks? In the Odyssey, we glimpse a city being founded as the Phaeacians, harried by their neigh-
bors, leave their home and settle in a new city far away. The poet recounts the story as follows:

So their godlike king, Nausithous, led the people off
in a vast migration, settled them in Scheria,
far from the men who toil on this earth –
he flung up walls around the city, built the houses,
raised the gods’ temples and shared the land for plowing. (6.8-12)

The basic plot here is typical of Greek city-founding narratives: there is a crisis at home; in response, a leader initiates an emigration project; after a long journey, a new settlement is founded; this is followed by a construction program: walls are put up for defense and buildings erected for both private and public purposes; and, finally, land is apportioned through some centralized authority or procedure.

It is this kind of story that the first century BCE Sicilian historian Diodorus relates about the founding of Thurii, a story that includes the destruction of Sybaris in the late sixth century, the failed attempts by the Sybarites to rebuild their city, the sailing of an Athenian-led expedition in the mid fifth century to a site nearby, the subsequent raising of walls, laying out of streets, and apportioning of land, etc. But if the Thurii project was similar to the founding of other towns during the archaic and classical periods, it was also unique. It was, for example, an insistently panhellenic project, a rare event in Greek colonization (according to L. H. Jeffery, “the Greeks did not mix Ionic and Doric” [54], yet this is exactly what they seem to have done at Thurii). Also unique about the project was the apparent idealism that motivated it, designed as it was not just to settle a people somewhere but to do so in an exemplary way. Finally, the Thurii project stands out from other colonization efforts in the stature and diversity of the individuals involved, a veritable “who’s who” from mid to late fifth century Greece – Pericles, Hippodamus, Protagoras, Herodotus, Empedocles, Lysias, Tisias, etc. (see, e.g., Freeman 56). It is to the first of these that we now turn.

2. PERICLES

Compared to Protagoras, whom Farrar calls “the first democratic political theorist in the history of the world” (77), a famous teacher and (according to Diogenes Laertius) the writer of at least a dozen books, and Hippodamus, whom Aristotle calls the first among non-politicians to say something about the best regime (Politics 2.8) and who was also a writer (see, e.g., Roberts 107; Burns 424). Pericles appears to us a more worldly figure, a doer rather than a thinker, and almost certainly not a writer (see Plutarch, Pericles 8; Yunis 64 n. 12). If we assume, with both ancient (Plutarch, Pericles 11) and
modern (Ehrenberg 163) sources, that he initiated the Thurii project, we would be justified in describing his interest in it as thoroughly pragmatic.

And this in fact is what historians tell us. Ehrenberg, for example, claims that the founding of Thurii was a function of the rivalry between democratic Athens and aristocratic Sparta (156), the ambitious Pericles using the colony to extend Athenian influence in the West and further establish its leadership over the Greeks (163). Plutarch writes, however, that the town was founded to rid Athens of its idle poor (Pericles 11), while Freeman argues that it was planned to be a way station to Sicily (50), and Hornblower (“Greece” 126-7), that it was a source of timber for Athenian shipbuilding.

And yet Pericles seems to have had a higher purpose in mind for the town as well, something that prompted him to invite men like Hippodamus and Protagoras to help plan it. He was, after all, an intellectual of sorts, the great patron of the mid fifth century Athenian Enlightenment (De Romilly passim; Kerferd 15-23), and the host of the leading “salon” of his day (see, e.g., the story of his day-long debate with Protagoras [Plutarch, Pericles 35]). According to Ehrenberg, he was a man “deeply interested in the modern teaching and in a philosophical approach to the problems of life and nature” (170). More specifically, he has come down to us as an extraordinarily thoughtful “reader” of the Athenian democracy.

I won’t rehearse here the debates about Pericles’ political ideology, whether he was a genuine democrat or a demagogue disguised as one. At the very least, he was an apparent democrat: in most accounts of mid fifth century Athens, it is Pericles (and his associates) who reduced the power of the aristocratic Areopagus, instituted pay for jurors, and built up the public spaces of Athens (thereby providing work for ordinary Athenians). And yet Pericles was no egalitarian or pluralist: born into a wealthy family, he tightened the criteria for Athenian citizenship, making the state essentially a closed society, monopolized power in his own person for nearly a generation, and followed a brazenly imperialistic foreign policy towards allies and enemies alike. In sum, he is the supreme embodiment of that great paradox of golden age Athenian democracy, in which the “people” held ultimate power in the state but ceded leadership of it to well-born, wealthy, and well-educated elites (see, e.g., Ober) and in which remarkable political and social freedom existed within a highly conventional culture.

This complex political ideology, at once radically democratic and unnervingly conservative, is nowhere more evident than in the funeral oration that Pericles delivers in Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War (2.35-46), in which Athens is presented as a society balanced – in rhetorical, political, and even, I believe, physical terms – between openness and control. For example, Pericles’ praise of the war dead reads sometimes like an encomium to speech and other times like a tribute to action. Again and again,
he presents *logos* as a crucial factor in the life of the polis: in Athens, he says, discussion is an indispensable preliminary to decision (2.40); and speech is necessary both to connect the death of these men to the greatness of their city and to elicit renewed “political” resolve among the living (2.42-3). And yet, despite his praise of speech, Pericles constantly appeals to the world beyond language, disparaging words (*logoi*) and celebrating deeds (*erga*), deflecting praise from language to a pre-existing and superior reality outside of language. The deeds of the dead, he says, are better matched by other deeds, not by speech; language always either under- or over-shoots reality (2.35); do not be merely persuaded to love your country, he urges his listeners, but actually do so (2.43), etc.

This balancing act between freedom and constraint in the realm of language is also played out in politics. Section 2.37 is worth quoting in full here:

> Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of this condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this, fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

Pericles celebrates Athenian rule by the many, the equality of its citizens under the law, the lack of class-based obstacles to advancement – in short, the remarkable experiment in participatory democracy that Athens had undertaken. And yet, despite the openness of the city and the equality of its citizens, Pericles notes, there are competitive advantages for the capable – for the well-born and well-spoken (cf. Ober; Kerferd). Equal standing among the Athenians, in other words, does not imply equal results (Hansen, *Athe-
nian). In a similar way, Athens combines freedom, both public and private, with unwavering respect for the law and a profound sense of civic duty. Pericles’ picture of the relaxed quality of Athenian life, its remarkable openness, and “the confident amateurism of its people” (Connor 66) continue to fascinate us; but his point here is that the city’s freedom must be viewed in the context of extraordinary practical effectiveness, vigilance in self-defense, and an aversion to effeminacy of any kind.

In short, the community praised in the funeral speech is one balanced between the equality, openness, and humanism of a direct democracy and the exclusivity, constraint, and conventionality of its aristocratic leaders. As the historian G. B. Kerferd has put it, Periclean democracy rested on two principles: “(1) that power should be with the people as a whole and not with a small section of the citizen body, and (2) that high offices carrying the right to advise and act for the people should be entrusted to those best fitted and most able to carry out these functions” (16). The first principle was expressed in the powers of the assembly, the paid juries, and the rotated magistracies. The second principle was expressed in, among other things, the election of the generals. The Athenian democracy, in other words, combined a commitment to equality with “a preference for superior people” (Kerferd 152), the demos viewing itself as comprised of ordinary men, the all-important metrioi or mesoi (see Morris, “Strong” 21), but led by the good and beautiful (see Marrou 72ff).

The balance described here by Pericles is not just between social classes, however; it is a balance within the citizen himself, one revealed by a uniquely Athenian set of mental and discursive activities. Here is section 2.40:

Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. Again, in our enterprises we present the singular spectacle of daring and deliberation, each carried to its highest point, and both united in the same persons.

The self-governed polis, in other words, is not just a product of negotiation between the elites and the masses; it comes about through an oscillation within each citizen: between daring and deliberation, initiation and judgment, ac-
tion and discussion, courage and wisdom. According to Cynthia Farrar, the quintessential Athenian virtue for Pericles is the capacity to act both boldly and reflectively (186). But what is most remarkable about this picture, I believe, is Pericles’ confident assurance that Athenian governance works, that it leads to good (i.e., orthos: wise, just, right, correct) decisions (2.40.2) (cf. Hornblower, Commentary 305-6; and Havelock: “the more pungent the debate, the better the machinery of decision-making works” [241]). It is an optimistic view of democracy, but one that I believe was shared by Hippodamus and Protagoras as well.

Which leads us to the following question: does the Periclean image of political community imply a particular configuration of civic space as well? I believe it does. First, the polis celebrated in Pericles’ oration is small enough that its people can all gather in one place at one time (cf. Aristotle, Politics 7.4 1326a35); and yet it is large enough that it requires speech acts to constitute it, to remind its citizens that they are in fact “a people” (demos) with a shared history, beliefs, values, etc. A smaller group would not need formal speech acts to bind themselves together — they would be a community in a profoundly unspoken way, by virtue of having drunk the same mother’s milk, as Aristotle memorably puts it (Politics 1.2 1252b15) — while a larger group would not so obviously share the concrete reality that makes “community” more than just a word.

Second, Pericles’ speech posits, I believe, a town with relatively free communication both within and without, a place where people can come and go as they please without surveillance from an inaccessible and mysterious hilltop. And yet Athens here is also very much a closed society, encircled by walls both real and imagined, separate from and, according to its citizens, superior to other states.

Third, the oration implies, I believe, a particular urban topography, namely, a city with an open area at its center, dedicated to public talk and the enactment of citizenship — a place to see and be seen, hear and be heard, to be with others on an equal footing and engaged in that most human of activities, the discussion of shared experience. Behind the speech, in other words, is an image of political and spatial equality. And yet the place where all gather in freedom and equality is also a place where the gaze of the many is directed to only a few, the leaders who survey the crowd from the bema’s perch. This is, after all, a place of intense contest and discrimination, where the public wins out over the private, free over slave, men over women, native over foreign, wealthy over poor, the brave, ambitious, beautiful, and eloquent over their opposites.

In sum, behind Pericles’ speech is a community with free and open debate at its core, a public realm transparent and accessible to all citizens; but it is also a place with limits: closed to non-citizens, intensely competitive, and
heavily disciplined. I call such a community a “bounded democracy,” and I believe it is the kind of state that Pericles and his friends tried to create in Southern Italy.

3. HIPPODAMUS

There is no real archaeological evidence for the physical layout of Thurii, though there are ruins from a later Roman town built on the same spot (Freeman 51). We get some information about the city from Diodorus, who probably had no first-hand knowledge of it himself: in 12.10-11 of his *Library*, he tells us about the selection of the site, the erection of walls, the division of the city lengthwise by four streets and breadth-wise by three, the filling in of these quarters with dwellings, and the apportionment of land into equal plots. (A speculative drawing of Thurii, based on Diodorus' description, can be found at Cahill 21. An electronic version of this text is available at http://www.stoa.org/olynthus, with the drawing of Thurii at http://www.stoa.org/cgi-bin/image?lookup=2002.01.0003. The drawing is adapted from one at Mertens and Greco 259.) Now, some of this sounds suspiciously like the passage quoted above from the *Odyssey*, but the part about the seven intersecting streets sounds a great deal like the mode of town planning associated in antiquity with the fifth century BCE Greek planner Hippodamus and that was seen even in his lifetime to be a new and radical mode of handling civic space. In addition, we have from a much later author, the fifth century CE Greek writer Hesychius, the explicit claim that Hippodamus participated in the Thurian project (Owens 56-7), although this is far from sure (see Castagnoli 135 n. 33).

Hippodamus was born in Miletus, a Greek city in Asia Minor, sometime around 500 BCE (Burns wants a slightly later date; Wycherley, an earlier one). Several things about Miletus make it a propitious site for the development of town planning. First, the city was an important point of contact between the west and the east, where the regularly planned town is thought to have originated (Stanislawski); second, it was a leader in colonization and therefore accustomed to planning new towns, claiming to have founded a hundred colonies in antiquity, more than any other Greek city (Jeffery 52, 209); third, it was a center of rational speculation and mathematical innovation in the Ionian tradition (Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes were all Milesians); and fourth, Miletus was itself destroyed (494 BCE) and rebuilt (479 BCE), apparently along progressive lines, something that Hippodamus may have participated in as a young man or observed as a boy.

By the mid fifth century, Hippodamus was apparently in Athens and already well-known as a town planner since Aristotle says he designed (or “cut up”) the port city of Piraeus (this is usually dated to c. 450 BCE) (*Politics* 2.8 1267b22). According to Burns, there is also evidence of Hippodamus’
work in Piraeus in the numerous horoi, or boundary stones, uncovered there, which suggest a careful allocation of space according to a master plan, something Hippodamus was known for (Aristotle again). Ancient sources also record a “Hippodamian agora” in Piraeus. There is no direct evidence of a connection between Hippodamus and Pericles, though they are indirectly linked by shared connections to Piraeus and Thurii (on the former, see Burns 422; on the latter, see above). Hippodamus may also have been a friend of Pericles’ mistress Aspasia, a fellow Milesian, and his teacher Anaxagoras, a fellow Ionian. And, as we will see below, Hippodamus has been linked to the sophists as well (see, e.g., Grimaldi 27 n. 31). Finally, there is a possible connection between Miletus and Thurii in the former’s support for Sybaris (see Ehrenberg 155).9

What do we know of Hippodamus’ design work? In antiquity, he was known as the father of town planning, or, more specifically, the inventor (or at least popularizer) of either zoning or the orthogonal street layout or both (see, e.g., Aristotle, Politics 2.8 1267b22). Clearly, as the Homeric story above illustrates, town planning itself predates Hippodamus, and we know with certainty that he did not invent the grid (Stanislawski; Burns). He probably was, however, an influential theorist and practitioner and may well have been the first to integrate the grid into a coherent, overall plan for a town. What we get with Hippodamus, in other words, is a leap in self-consciousness, an explicit connection, perhaps for the first time in history, between physical town planning and abstract political and social ideas.

If, in fact, Hippodamus designed Thurii, how would he have envisioned it?

**Straight streets**

First, he would have planned it to have straight streets crossed at right angles, the so-called “orthogonal,” ordered, rectangular, or regular plan. Aristotle refers to this as the “newer and Hippodamian method [tropos]” of town planning, contrasted to the earlier layout of crooked streets (Politics 7.11 1330b24). Now, the use of intersecting straight streets in laying out a town seems rather obvious, as does the extension of such a layout into a uniform grid, which I will discuss below. But, surprisingly, the use of intersecting straight streets is not widespread in antiquity (Stanislawski). According to Castagnoli, it appears first at the end of the sixth century BCE in Selinus, a Greek town in Sicily, where an orthogonal intersection of two major axes has been found. This system appears to have developed independently in the Etruscan and Greek worlds, though among the Greeks it seems to have evolved in the direction of a diffuse grid pattern, while with the Romans, it developed more into a hierarchical pattern in which two main streets (the *cardo* and *decumanus*) intersected centrally and all other streets were subor-
What are some of the prerequisites for designing a city with intersecting straight streets? There are at least three: sufficient flat land (suggesting an agricultural and, possibly, a democratic, society [Aristotle Politics, 7.11 1330b17], though the latter connection is weak at best), centralized control (i.e., no ownership claims that would impede the laying out of straight streets), and a capacity for exact measurement (good tools, knowledge of geometry, etc.). But why would anyone use such a scheme? What do straight streets offer a people?

First, they are capable of being laid out in advance of any actual settlement and are thus a powerful tool of abstract planning: simple, portable, and efficient. Second, they are regular and symmetrical and thus provide a measure of social and aesthetic order. Third, they offer residents easy internal communication (though this also applies, unfortunately, to foreign invaders). Fourth, they appear to support democracy because they make city life transparent and because they are linked, as we will see below, to the equal apportionment of land (though this is debatable: Zucker refers to the axis of two intersecting straight streets as “the architecturally crystallized form of a dictatorial concept of society” [31], and Castagnoli argues that the axial arrangement was associated with “strong tyrannical governments capable of exercising total and complete planning authority” [129]).

Finally – and here’s where the link to Pericles and Protagoras is, to my mind, most intriguing – straightness seems to have had for Hippodamus and the Greeks connotations of correctness and truth. The Greek word orthos, which we encountered above in Pericles’ depiction of Athenian decision-making (Thucydides 2.40.2) and which we will see below in Protagoras’ theory of civic discourse, meant not just right-angled or straight but also upright, correct, true, and just. This should not surprise us, since the English word “straight” has the same connotations: frank, reliable, even, proper, direct, true. And in both languages, the opposite of straightness is literal and figurative “crookedness” (Gk. skolios). From this point of view, an orthogonal layout made a town not just simple to design, pleasing to behold, and easy to navigate; it also made it good.

**The grid of uniform blocks**

The second design feature that Hippodamus may have used at Thurii is the repetition of intersecting straight streets into an overall grid of uniform, equal blocks. Most commentators conflate the first feature of Hippodamian design, orthogonal streets, with this one, the grid. But one can have the former without the latter (for example, in the two-street axial plan described above). It is the extension of orthogonal streets into a uniform grid, usually **without** a Roman-style central intersection, that is most distinctive of fifth
century Greek, or Hippodamian, town planning. According to Castagnoli, the grid can only come from a master plan providing for the development of an entire city; a rectilinear layout, on the other hand, can conceivably be used to design a single street stretching into nowhere. The important thing about the grid, then, is not so much its straightness as the way it divides a city into uniform precincts or lots. For Castagnoli, this is the specifically Hippodamian innovation in town planning. Peter Simpson’s 1997 translation of Aristotle’s *Politics* would seem to support this view: “Private dwellings are thought to be more pleasantly arranged, and more usefully with a view to other activities, if they are neatly divided in the more recent and Hippodamean fashion” (7.11 1330b21ff).

Now, if the axial arrangement described above has at best a tenuous relationship to democracy, the grid may have a better claim, since it is so good at dividing up space equally. And this is how the Hippodamian grid has usually been read. Castagnoli, for example, argues that “the grid is adapted to a democratic society based on equality of citizens.” For some historians, the equality engendered by the grid was manifest most obviously in the equality of lot (and therefore house) size in the town. According to this theory, the basic unit of the grid plan was the *insula*, or city block, each block being of equal size in most Greek towns that used the system (Owens). Thus, Ehrenberg argues that the plan of Thurii was “an expression of democracy because its houses were of equal size” (166).

There is a problem, however, with connections between the grid and democracy, even assuming that the lots at Thurii were of equal size. It’s possible, of course, to have equality (of some sort) without democracy (the workers’ quarters in the old towns of Egypt are clearly equalitarian but not democratic), just as it is possible to have democracy (of some sort) without having equality. What may be more correct is to say, with Stanislawski, that the grid *facilitates* the equal apportionment of land, and this *can* contribute to the development and maintenance of *isonomia* (equality) in a community. But the grid itself is probably neither a necessary nor a sufficient prerequisite of democracy, since communal land ownership, or even a radiocentric town plan, can also be democratic, and since the grid, as we will see below, can also facilitate land speculation and thus monopolization, the very opposite of equal apportionment. But if both Diodorus and Aristotle were right about democratic control at Thurii (cf. Ehrenberg), the grid may have served there as a ready and transparent way to divide up urban space fairly, and this may have been influential in the city’s political life.

**Zoning**

The third design feature in my reconstruction of Thurii is the division of the city into zones. For Burns, *this* is the true Hippodamian innovation: land
allocation within a master plan. Thus, Aristotle's statement that Hippodamus “invented [heure] the dividing up of cities [poleon diairesin]” (Politics 2.8 1267b22) refers, Burns argues, not to the orthogonal grid (i.e., that Hippodamus was the first to divide the city into blocks, as Rackham translates the passage and as Castagnoli and others interpret it) but to the allocation of land within an overall plan (i.e., that Hippodamus was the first to divide the city into zones, precincts, or neighborhoods). This accords with Aristotle’s later statement that Hippodamus “divided the land [of his ideal city] into three parts – sacred, public, and private” Politics (2.8 1267b30), the first intended for the gods, the second for the warriors, and the third for the farmers. Owens finds an example of such zoning (combined with the grid) in Poseidonia (an Italian colony of Sybaris), where two gridded residential sections were separated by a strip of public land for the temples and agora. And, according to Ward-Perkins, Hippodamus’ plan for Piraeus was essentially an exercise in zoning, the town apparently divided into sacred, public, private, and commercial sections.\textsuperscript{14}

A vision of the city as a whole

The division of the city into zones implies a fourth and final feature of Hippodamian town planning: its basis in a unified vision of the community. In such a vision, the city is the preeminent unit of political life, rather than, say, the tribe, the empire, the royal family, a social or economic class, or territory itself. As Owens puts it, the most important feature of Hippodamus’ work is his integration of physical town planning with political philosophy. Zucker agrees: the grid and other features of Hippodamian design express above all else the town as a coherent and balanced organization, with all parts functioning together. Castagnoli also sees Hippodamus’ use of a master plan as what separates him from previous designers. And, as Morris puts it, Hippodamus may not have invented the grid, but he was the first to organize the parts of a town into “an integrated urban entity” (“Greek” 27).

So, we have a mode of urban design that involves straight streets crossed at right angles, extended into a uniform grid of equal lots, the whole divided into zones and organized by a coherent master plan. Such planning clearly has practical benefits. Rectangular plots are easy to lay out, and they can be extended indefinitely. If, as Stanislawski argues, an equitable division of property is desirable, there is hardly any other plan conceivable. And Zucker outlines the economic advantages of such a regular distribution of building lots, which would become so influential in the development of towns and cities in the United States, the grid being “the simplest, cheapest, and clearest way of dividing land for rapid development” (Warner 51-2).

But the Hippodamian method can also be read in non-practical terms, for example, as an expression of the Ionian preference for rational thinking
According to Ehrenberg, the real importance of Hippodamus was his attempt to build towns on “a purely rational pattern,” thereby “mastering the ground.” Similarly for Mumford, Hippodamus’ true innovation consisted in realizing that the form of the city was the form of its social order, and to remold one it is necessary to introduce appropriate changes in the other. He seems too to have realized that town planning should have not merely an immediate practical aim, but an ideal goal of larger dimensions; and he thought of his art as a means of formally embodying and clarifying a more rational social order. (172) (see also McCredie.)

Of course, the very idea of planning a town, something that was clearly central to the Hippodamian project, is a top-down phenomenon and, in a sense, strikingly un-democratic. And yet its essentially secular nature, the lack of an obvious military, religious, commercial, or monarchical motivation behind it, would suggest that the plan of Thurii was well-suited to a people looking for freedom and autonomy.

Which brings us to a final point about Hippodamian urban design. Compared to most other ancient (and many modern) ways of planning social space, the mode we are examining here demonstrates remarkable faith in ordinary people, their practices and capabilities. In the plan of Thurii, at least as I’ve reconstructed it here, very little would have been marked as obscure, exclusive, or off-limits. The lots were likely of all the same size, with the houses all facing the street (Owens). Straight lines would have brought residents and visitors into the city, carried them to its center, and then to its various quarters. Everything was surprisingly transparent. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say, as Ehrenberg argued, that Hippodamus’ design for the town was an “expression of democracy.” After all, Aristotle refers to the democratic nature of Hippodamus’ ideas (Politics, 2.8 1267b37); Muir calls him a “thorough-going democrat” (see also Barker 45); and Thurii itself has usually been read as “a progressive community” (Kriesis, qtd. in Morris, “Greek”; for democracy there, see Aristotle, Politics 5.7 1307a20; and Diodorus). It is at least plausible that Pericles found in Hippodamus just the person to design his model city in Southern Italy, especially if we understand the ideal of both to be the kind of “bounded democracy” described above.

4. PROTAGORAS

Protagoras was the most famous and influential of the First or Older Sophists, a loose collection of itinerant teachers and thinkers active in Greece in the second half of the fifth century BCE, a group which also included Gorgias, Hippias, Prodicus, Antiphon, Thrasymachus, and others.15 Most were non-Athenian Greeks drawn to that city because of its prestige, wealth,
freedom, lack of xenophobia (De Romilly 18ff), and the patronage and support of Pericles, who was by most accounts receptive to their ideas.\textsuperscript{16} They have come down to us as proponents of a new kind of intellectual culture, perhaps the first true humanists in history, and the inaugurators of an educational tradition that has persisted, albeit somewhat battered, all the way up to the present. There is, of course, much that we don’t know about the sophists, but there are two things that we can say with some certainty about them: they were teachers, and their educational program was seen by many to be a threat to the “old” order (see, e.g., Marrou; De Romilly).

The key to the emergence and success of the sophists in Athens seems to have been the advent there of a democratic system of self-government and the desire of wealthy young men to succeed in it. What the sophists provided those men was an art of civic life – intellectual rather than athletic (Marrou; De Romilly) and practical rather than contemplative – which could literally be purchased. And since ancient democracy was preeminently a regime of speech, practical effectiveness in classical Athens meant being verbally skilled: fluent, clever, pleasing, and correct – hence, the deep connection between the sophistic program and what would later be known as rhetoric. In fact, what Thomas Sloane has termed the “rhetorical cast of mind” (86) – a “lawyerly” contrarianism combined with epistemological skepticism, respect for social consensus, a fully-stocked resourcefulness, a supple flexibility, and a desire to “get down to cases” – is precisely the skill set that the fifth century sophists claimed to teach. The connection between such skills and democracy is still made today; Richard Lanham, for example, argues that the traits of the \textit{homo rhetoricus} are the very dispositions needed in “a genuine and open-ended democracy” (693).

Protagoras was born in Abdera, in northern Greece, about 480 BCE but was, like Hippodamus, in Athens by mid-century (Plato, \textit{Protagoras}) and soon famous there. He was apparently a friend of Pericles (O’Sullivan; Plutarch). And, at least according to Diogenes Laertius, the third century CE Greek author, he was the writer of Thurii’s laws (\textit{Lives} 9.50, quoting Heracleides Ponticus). Apollodorus seems to confirm the story; he dates Protagoras’ \textit{acme} during the eighty-fourth Olympiad (that is, 444 BCE), precisely the year usually given for the founding of Thurii (see Farrar 44 n. 2). Schiappa, meanwhile, has Protagoras living in Thurii for ten years (205); and O’Sullivan (16) claims that the line in Aristophanes’ \textit{Clouds} 332 about a “Thurian seer” is a veiled reference to Protagoras (though it could just as easily point to Hippodamus). Finally, the story of Protagoras’ involvement in the Thurii project is consistent with Plato’s depiction of the sophist as deeply interested in law, discourse, education, and the \textit{polis} (\textit{Protagoras} and \textit{Theatetus} 167c), including the founding of \textit{poleis}. Diodorus, unfortunately, attributes Thurii’s laws to someone else; and at least one modern account of
Thurii makes no mention of Protagoras at all (Freeman). Ehrenberg, however, sees no reason to doubt the traditional story of the sophist’s involvement in the colony (168); and, according to Muir, “A more suitable choice for a democratic constitutional planner would have been hard to find – a perfect complement to the forward-looking city architect” (19).

In what ways might Thurii have been planned along sophistic lines? One feature of Thurii that is compatible with sophistic thinking and practice is its international character. We have seen how the sophists were drawn from all over Greece; so too were the colonists of Thurii. Diodorus tells us that ten tribes participated in the project: three from the Peloponnese (Arcase, Achais, Eleia), three Dorian groups from outside of the Peloponnese (Boeotia, Amphictyonis, Doris), and four from other races (Ias, Athenais, Eubois, Nesiotis) (Freeman 56ff). As pointed out earlier, this mix of tribes is extraordinary in the history of Greek city-founding. I have heretofore treated panhellenism as a pragmatic feature of the colony, following Ehrenberg’s interpretation that it was part of Pericles’ attempt to build and lead an anti-Spartan alliance (153ff). But the internationalism of Thurii could also be seen as part of the project’s idealism. In fact, for many scholars, what most makes Thurii a “model” city is neither its politics nor its design but its panhellenism. As itinerant teachers, cultural relativists, theorists of political life and language who constantly emphasized the social construction of beliefs and values and the need for flexibility in civic affairs – the sophists would presumably have been comfortable in such a diverse community.

Another feature of the Thurii project compatible with sophistic thinking was the rational and humanistic spirit that seems to have informed it. Its simple, rectangular plan and democratic political system speak to a trust in human institutions and practices, in social coordination and problem-solving, that is consistent with the sophistic interest in, and commitment to, the situation of human experience within concrete time and space. Jarratt refers to this as the sophists’ “materialist anthropology” (xviii). It is probably this more than anything that has endeared them to contemporary “sophists,” who, as John Nelson argues, share their rejection of global generalizations, belief in the unity of concrete experience, support for pluralism of values and beliefs, emphasis on solving situated problems, and faith in the open-ended nature of human action (summarized in Leff 23). Protagoras is key here; in Farrar’s words, he was the first great celebrant of everyday phenomena, of ordinary people and their experiences of the world:

In the face of both philosophical and political contempt for what men think they know, Protagoras attempted to rehabilitate practical reason founded on experience, to give legitimacy to human beliefs . . . [Order] is to be understood not as transcendent, but as built up through interac-
tion, and stability and regularity are to be seen as implicit in the world of change, the world of experience. (46-7)

But just as Thurii’s panhellenism was offset by its Athenian leadership, the colony’s reputed humanism was no doubt counterbalanced by a strong element of religious piety: according to Diodorus, the colony was founded in close consultation with oracles (Freeman 50-1) (see also Kerferd; De Romilly).

Finally, the political ideology behind Thurii was compatible, I believe, with the sophistic movement, both projects invested in the kind of social system that I called above a “bounded democracy” – that combination of mass participation (with its validation of ordinary human experience) and elite leadership (with its self-serving reverence for tradition).

Now what would Protagoras in particular have contributed to such an enterprise? I believe he brought to Thurii a theory of civic discourse perfectly keyed to both Periclean politics and Hippodamian space. It was a theory made up of two parts. First, Protagoras’ account of social language was imbued with the importance of debate, of discursive agon, the opposition of arguments in the negotiation of situated human affairs. This is most succinctly revealed in Protagoras’ “two-accounts” fragment, often rendered “there are two sides to every question” but which Schiappa translates as “Two accounts [logoi] are present about every ‘thing,’ opposed to each other” (89ff; the source is Diogenes Laertius 9.51). It is a saying that reminds us of the imperfect grasp that humans have on truth but that also celebrates our uniquely human way of dealing with that condition (that is, with one another, in dialogue, sensitive to time and place, etc.). Though this belief fell on hard times in the early modern era (in a Cartesian world, if two people disagree on an issue, one of them must be wrong), recent educators and thinkers have been captivated by Protagorean “anti-logic.” Michael Billig, for example, uses Protagoras to emphasize the importance of “two-sided thinking” in human life:

Logos only works its unopposed will over the feeblest of frames. Those with more powerful constitutions can grasp the logos and hurl it mightily back. In fact rhetorical training will build up the argumentative constitution, in order to strengthen the forces of anti-logoi. This, then, is the true power of logos. The power of speech is not the power to command obedience by replacing argument with silence. It is the power to challenge silent obedience by opening arguments. The former result can be attained by physical force as well as by logos, but the latter can only be achieved by logos, or rather by anti-logos. (78)

But doesn’t such teaching inculcate the belief that all truth is relative
and no one knows anything for certain? that the truth for any person is simply what he or she can be persuaded of, and it's possible to persuade him or her of anything (Guthrie 51)? Doesn't this lead inexorably to a subjectivism according to which there is no reality behind and independent of appearances, no difference between seeming and being, each of us the judge of our own impressions (186)? (On Protagorean relativism, see also Kerferd; De Romilly.) At the very least, two-sidedness seems to be an expression of deep skepticism; as Farrar puts it, "In arguments about knowledge, as in political discussions in the assembly, all claims could be questioned, and no one dis-putant could trump the others by appealing to some privileged access to things as they really are" (63-4).

Which brings us to the second part of Protagoras' theory of civic discourse. Balancing his celebration of debate, two-sidedness, and the relativity of truth was an unabashed commitment to the search for correctness in language and belief (orthos logos). Now, how could Protagoras, the proto-relativist, be committed to such a search? Kerferd explains the paradox this way: the starting point for the sophists was the phenomenal world and its constantly changing appearances, all of which were "true" to the humans who perceived them (72-3; see also Plato, Theaetetus 152b). It followed for the sophists that language must exhibit the same structure, leaving them with nothing but true positive statements about the phenomenal world. Unfortunately, this multivocality seemed to deprive the sophists of their claim to wisdom. Protagoras solved this problem by simply changing the criterion of evaluation: all statements, like all perceptions, may be equally true, but they are not all equally right. Within a particular context of evaluation, one logos is stronger than the other, straighter, better; this, for Protagoras, is the orthos logos (Kerferd 102). As Jarratt puts it, we may begin with contradiction and debate, but our goal is a good decision, which comes about by weighing arguments according to probability, fit, justice, common sense, etc.

Protagoras' orthos logos, in other words, sets aside truth and installs in its place a governing value that is political and moral rather than epistemological (Donovan 43ff). The "straightness" in orthos logos refers, therefore, not to accuracy or correctness but to propriety, conventionality, obligatoriness, rectitude, and fairness. As Donovan translates it, orthos logos is just discourse, opposed to crooked (skolios) discourse. What Protagoras' doctrine provided, then, was a way of comparing judgments in terms of their consequences (Kerferd 106). It allowed for both an awareness of cultural and interpersonal diversity and enormous respect for local values and beliefs (Schiappa 163ff; see also Bett 154ff; Kerferd; Farrar, 72-75).

So, to our opening question, what did Periclean politics, Hippodamian space, and Protagorean education have to do with one another, we have now a possible answer: all shared the goal of building a community that com-
bined equality among citizens (and the multivocality implied therein) with respect for local notions of the good and right. This combination can be seen in the Periclean formula of wide participation plus elite leadership, the Hippodamian plan of an open public sphere surrounded by a grid of intersecting straight streets, and the Protagorean hope that two-sided argumentation would produce sound decision-making.

Protagoras’ theory of civic discourse was not, however, just a solution to a philosophical problem about perceptions and statements. I believe it also informed the Thurian law-code, which Protagoras supposedly wrote. Now, the sophists in general were apparently fascinated by laws, or *nomoi*, defined by Jarratt as provisional codes (habits or customs) of acceptable behavior, socially constructed and historically and geographically specific (74). In this account, *nomoi* occupy a kind of middle ground between pre-literate *mythoi* and philosophical-scientific *logoi*. They stand for order, valid and binding on those who fall under their jurisdiction (60), an order that is nonetheless opposed to both monarchical fiat and natural or divine law (42).

We lack stone tablets preserving the law code of Thurii. But we do have some clues, in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Diodorus, which can help us reconstruct at least the broad lines of a possible constitution. Plato’s Protagoras, for example, evinces a profound interest in the founding of cities, the necessity of civic virtue for preserving those cities, and the importance of education in inculcating virtue, this including not just formal schooling but parental guidance, neighborhood role models, local laws, history, etc. Aristotle’s description of Hippodamus’ laws at Politics 2.8 1267b37ff, meanwhile, may also tell us something about Thurii’s constitution: 10,000 citizens were divided into three classes (artisans, farmers, and warriors); the city itself was divided into three zones (sacred, public, and private); and the law code was divided into three kinds of crime, each with an appropriate punishment. It is a law code which highlights order, simplicity, and transparency, demonstrates a pronounced concern for punishment and procedure, and expresses a commitment to democratic participation and control (officers were to be elected by all the citizens and were directly responsible to them). In a later passage (5.7 1307a20), Aristotle comments specifically on Thurii’s laws (attributing them to neither Hippodamus nor Protagoras), which are clearly those of a participatory democracy, e.g., no man may be elected *strategos* twice within five years. Diodorus also comments on Thurii’s laws (though he doesn’t attribute them to Protagoras). Some of these are merely quaint – for example, men who fail twice at marriage are barred from participation in politics – while others are more revealing and include, for example, rigid procedures about revising the laws.

There is intriguing overlap among these texts. First, all three accounts evince a shared commitment to democracy, to self-rule by ordinary individu-
als. Second, there is a countervailing concern in all three for order, punishment, and restraint. We have seen before this balance between openness and control, and I believe the Thurian constitution, whoever wrote it, was probably written with that balance in mind. But there is a third feature shared by these texts, one which we haven’t seen before: an interest in the care and education of children. In Plato’s dialogue, Protagoras is shown to be profoundly interested in the moral, social, and political development of the young. And Aristotle reports a law of Hippodamus’ requiring public support of orphans – this reminds us of a similar concern expressed by Pericles at the end of the funeral oration, a speech in which O’Sullivan, for one, hears a Protagorean echo. But most remarkable of all is Diodorus’ startling claim that one of the laws at Thurii mandated free public education in reading and writing (see Muir), one of the earliest references to public education in the West.

Given this concern for education, perhaps we should say that Protagoras’ theory of civic discourse is really a theory of civic virtue and its development. According to this theory, virtue is no man’s private possession; all can acquire it through their parents, teachers, and all the informal and formal means of the city itself. Every man, therefore, has the right to advise the city on political questions and participate in its deliberations, though some will have greater capacity than others. As Kerferd puts it, all men share in political virtue, but they do not share equally in it:

The importance of this doctrine of Protagoras in the history of political thought can hardly be exaggerated. For Protagoras has produced for the first time in human history a theoretical basis for participatory democracy. All men through the educational process of living in families and in societies acquire some degree of political and moral insight. This insight can be improved by various formal programmes in schools and under particular teachers and also by the operation of laws deliberately devised by the polis in order to supplement the earlier education of its citizens. So all have something to contribute to the discussion of moral and political questions, whereas in matters involving special skills and special knowledge the polis will naturally turn for advice only to those who are experts. But in moral and political questions it is not the case that all opinions and all pieces of advice are of equal value. It follows that in a Protagorean democracy the operative principle concerning advice will be ‘from each according to his capacity,’ and somehow or other it will be necessary for the community to choose between conflicting advice. (144).

Thus, Protagorean society allows for free and open debate but is guided by
those with the most wisdom on each occasion; as Havelock puts it, the Athenian democracy may not have been an egalitarian society, but it was a participation one (171).

5. CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to visit a part of Thurii that we have not yet seen, a part that I believe epitomized the confluence of Periclean democracy, Hippodamian space, and Protagorean discourse. It is the agora, that flat, open, empty square which served, among many other things, as the central gathering place in the town.

Diodorus says nothing about an agora at Thurii, and Aristotle doesn’t mention an agora in his discussion of Hippodamus. Mumford, on the other hand, suggests that Hippodamus introduced a formal, enclosed agora at Piraeus (172, 192) (cf. Burns). But even without direct supporting evidence, we can safely assume that Thurii had an agora. As Zucker says, the classical Greek polis is inseparable from its central square or marketplace: “It is the agora that makes the town a polis and is, in fact, the true Greek contribution to town planning” (31). We can find, he continues, both town planning in general and the grid scheme in particular before Hippodamus and the Greeks, but we don’t find a consciously planned town square or agora before the late sixth, early fifth centuries BCE. The explanation for this, says Zucker, is sociological and political: the agora developed with democracy and is the key spatial manifestation of it.

We can trace this development with some confidence. In the Mycenaean period, the Greek town was focused on a fortified citadel (the acropolis), with the ruler’s palace on high, the town densely packed around it, interconnected by narrow alleys: crowded, poor, and defense-oriented (Owens 12ff). By the fifth century, however, at least at Athens, the political center of gravity in the town had shifted from the acropolis to the flat, open marketplace nearby. The change was not merely topographical. As Wycherley argues, “[T]he gradual emergence of a large body of free and equal citizens, all taking a full and active part in political and social life, guided the architectural growth of the city” (7), which now required a central, open, and well-drained space for citizens to gather and conduct business. Zucker agrees: only within a civilization where the anonymous human being had become a “citizen,” where democracy had unfolded to some extent, could a central gathering place become important enough to take on a specific shape (19ff). In the fifth and fourth centuries, the agora was the heart of the democratic polis (see also Ward-Perkins 12; Hölscher 367; Herodotus 1.153, where democracy is equated with the agora); Vernant 37ff; and Morris, “Greek” 25).

It was here, in the agora, that citizenship was enacted. For Wycherley, the agora marked the meeting of streets and thus of people (see also Vernant,
for whom the agora was always a place “in the middle,” *to meson* [125-6]), the site of the symbolic hearth of the polis (cf. Malkin), but also of numerous other civic structures, functions, and symbols: monuments, altars, temples, theaters and festivals, fountains, drains, the town mint, the central place for gossip, barbershops, the site of schools, etc. Of specifically political facilities, meanwhile, we can follow the recent work of Hansen and Fischer-Hansen on the architecture of Greek democracy: the five political structures they identify and survey were all associated in one way or another with the agora: the *prytaneion* (executive chamber), *bouleuterion* (council hall), *ekklesiasterion* (assembly ground), *dikasterion* (courts), and *stoa* (arcades for informal talk but also rooms for the magistracies, boards for public messages, etc.). In fact, the first two structures, they argue, virtually define the polis architecturally (i.e., we know we have found an independent Greek city-state when we can locate the ruins of, at least, a *bouleuterion* and *prytaneion*).

The agora was, in other words, the literal *scene* of Aristotle’s citizen (“defined by nothing else so much as by his having a share in judgment and rule or office,” *Politics* 3.1 1275a22) as well as the central site of rhetoric itself.211

Thus, “forensic,” or what Aristotle calls “dikanic” discourse (*dikanikon*), consists of speeches concerning questions of justice (*dike*) presented before a magistrate (*dikastēs*) or an assembly of jurymen (*dikastai*) in a *court of law* (*dikastēron*). Likewise, “deliberative,” or what Aristotle calls “symbouleutic” or “demegoric” discourse (*symbouleutikon*, *demeigorikon*), consists of speeches of counsel (*boulē*) for or against a particular initiative presented before councilors (*bouleutai*) in a *council hall* (*bouleuterion*), or before a crowd of assemblymen (*ekklēsiaiastai*) in the *public assembly* (*ekklēsia*) or “demegore” (*deme-agora*: *dēmos*, the district or its people + *agora*, meeting place). (Walker 253, emphases added.)

Consequently, the agora was the preeminent scene of political education in the classical polis, a place where citizens learned to handle their civic responsibilities skillfully and thoughtfully. As Zucker puts it, the agora “humanized” those who met in it.

We don’t know where the agora at Thurii was located or what it looked like or how big it was or what transpired there, but it is hard to imagine men like Pericles, Hippodamus, and Protagoras not including it in the plan for their model city and according it the utmost importance.

Several thousand miles away, and two and a half thousand years later,
we Americans live essentially without town squares. We have always been nervous about having empty places in the middle of our cities, places dedicated to nothing more substantial than discourse. We feel as if there should be a post office there or a park for repose and relaxation, a place to feed the pigeons. If Joseph Rykwert is right, that the physical fabric of a town is a “tangible representation” of the society that lives in it (6), we would have to say that our towns lack the architectural framework for a genuinely public life. Now, there is no reason to wax nostalgic about the Greek polis: it will not come again and there are good reasons for not wanting it to. But the idea that I believe animated the Thurii project, the idea that public discourse, public space, and public schooling were intimately connected, and that a free, open, and well-functioning democracy depended on those interconnections, seems worth recalling.

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Notes

1 For patient and helpful readings of this essay, I am indebted to Michael Bernard-Donals of the English Department and Laura McClure of the Classics Department, both at UW-Madison, to Richard Leo Enos of Texas Christian University, and to an anonymous reviewer for this journal.

2 On the story of Thurii (or Thourioi), the main ancient source is the Library (12.9ff) of Diodorus Siculus, a first century BCE Greek author. For modern accounts, see Ehrenberg; Freeman; and Muir.

3 On Greek colonization in general, see Enos, Greek Rhetoric and Roman Rhetoric; Finley; Grant; Jeffery; Kitto; Martin; Morris, “Greek”; and Ridgway.

4 But see H. T. Wade-Gery’s 1932 claim that Thurii was an aristocratic, genuinely panhellenic enterprise (rather than democratic and Athenian-led), the pet project not of Pericles but of his opponent Thucydides, son of Melesias (Ehrenberg 159ff).

5 It is, of course, dangerous to assume that the speeches attributed to Pericles in Thucydides’ History are, in fact, Pericles’ actual words or even his ideas; Thucydides himself attests to the gap between his reconstruction of events and the events themselves. But the speeches do attest, I believe, to ideas that at least one well-educated Athenian found “in the air” at the time (and my purpose in this paper, after all, is to trace the influence and inter-relations of certain ideas). Furthermore, the description of Athens in the Funeral Oration meshes in important ways with other things we know about both the city and Pericles.

6 Though there is still a strong unspoken component to the Periclean regime (see, e.g., the last sentence of 2.37).

7 The word “bounded” is carefully chosen here; I have consciously avoided terms like “mixed,” “moderate,” and “limited” to describe Athens’ democracy because they sound to me too much like a loss of nerve. The phrase “ordered” democracy, meanwhile, like Edmund Burke’s “ordered liberty,” is, I believe, simply a mask for a thoroughly conservative regime. “Bounded,” by contrast, is a more positive descrip-
tor, in which the political community is seen to be importantly and inextricably situated in a particular place and time. I’m also playing a bit here with Herbert A. Simon’s theory of “bounded” rationality (3), though the most important connection is clearly to geography.

8 Enough time had elapsed between destruction and rebuilding so that old property claims and other conservative factors were less an obstacle than they were in the case of Athens’ rebuilding after similar destruction in 480 BCE.

9 In addition to Miletus, Piraeus, and Thurii, Hippodamus’ name has also been associated with the late fifth century layout of Rhodes, though this may be the least sure of the cities attributed to him.

10 Aristotle says that the modern way of straight streets facilitates invasion by an external force while the old way is better for defense (Politics 7.11 1330b21; see also Stanislawski 107).

11 Castagnoli does not see the axial arrangement as a feature of Hippodamian design, which he argues was “adapted to a democratic society based on equality among its citizens . . . it developed in the fifth century, after the fall of tyranny and the affirmation of democratic constitutions” (62).

12 The grid layout has seemed to many historians and designers natural and obvious, though Stanislawski finds it surprisingly rare in antiquity, at least until the Greeks and then the Romans made it the basis for most new towns after the sixth century BCE (the earliest recorded use of the grid, according to Stanislawski, is in the Indus valley town of Mohenjo-Daro).

13 The claim that there is a link between the insulae of Hippodamian town planning and the equality, or isonomía, of citizens in Greek democracy, was advanced most persuasively by Hoepfner and Schwandner in their 1986 discussion of Typenhäuser at Priene, Miletos, Peiraeus, Thurii, Rhodes, and other cities (summarized by Hansen and Fischer-Hansen [81ff]). The claim has been disputed by Boedeker and Raaflaub (11, 347 n. 39).

14 Mumford probably goes too far, however, when he claims that Hippodamus was the first designer of neighborhoods.

15 For debate about whether there was a “sophistic” movement at all, see the Poulakos/Schiappa exchange in Schiappa, Landmark; for general background on the sophists and their philosophical and pedagogical program, see De Romilly; Guthrie; Kerferd; and Schiappa, Protagoras.

16 There was also a later generation of home-grown sophists in Athens, the best known being Isocrates.

17 This is apparently the source of Mumford’s erroneous claim that the town was divided into 10 neighborhoods.

18 The same phrase, orthotatos logos or orthos logos can also be found in the debate between Pericles and Protagoras in Plutarch, in Antiphon’s Tetralogies, and various places in Plato (Kerferd 102, 137).

19 I’ve said little about Herodotus, though in many ways he fits in well with the rational, humanistic, sophistic project of Thurii (see Ehrenberg 169-70; and Kerferd 150ff on Herodotus’ praise of isonomía).

20 Though as Athens itself grows, the political and rhetorical functions of the agora are delegated out geographically, to the nearby Pynx, for ex.
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