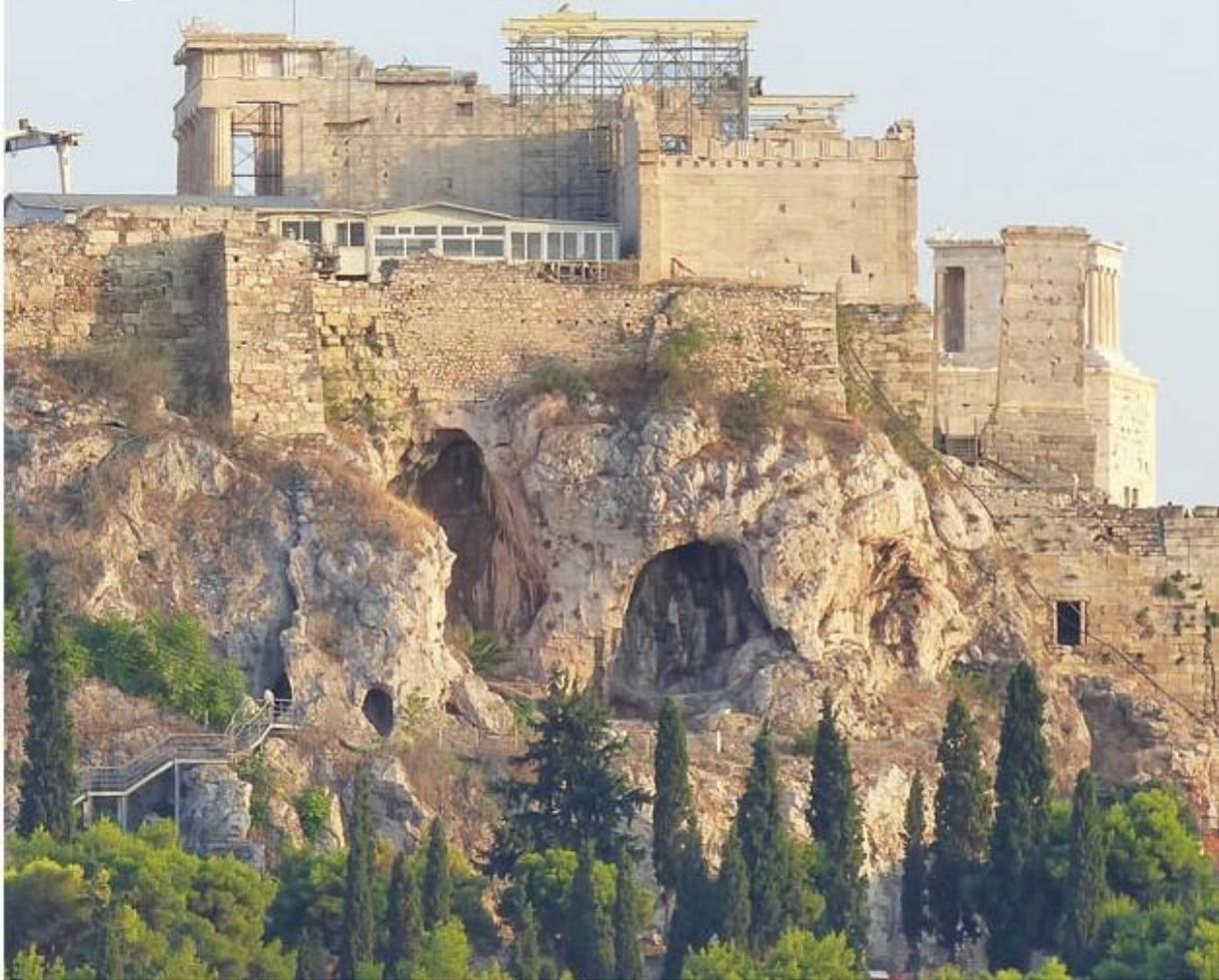


## In Apollon`s cave



The Apollon cave

"Ion": In the classical play "Ion" by Euripides (485-406 BC), the king's daughter Creusa is raped by the god Apollon, the most popular of the gods among the Athenians. The brutal act was just under her father's house; the Erechtheion Temple at the Acropolis. She got pregnant, and at birth she is in the cave to leave the child -Ion- to die.

She can't tell her father of her pregnancy, because of shame. When she leaves the cave Apollon has Hermes to bring the child to the Apollon Temple in Delphi without Creusas knowledge. Ion grows up to be a young man, not knowing his mother or his father. Many years later, Apollon tries to "place" Ion over to Creusas husband, Xuthus. Later, Creusa plans to kill Ion when Xuthus wants Ion to go to Athens as his heir.

The play problematizes the free speech in democracy; Ion, not having the right of speech/ citizen rights coming to Athens even though from royal family, *and* a gods son.

*Scene from the play:* The play has actuality for our time, in the way of democratic attitude, development, and cultural challenges. On Sunday evening the 10.09.17. a scene from "Ion" becomes live. We see Creusa in great sadness, lay her child at the side in the cave of Apollon. Creusa is played by an Athenian actress. This scene is a part in the context of a larger thematic project where a small group of people is walking a few distances between Athens

and Delphi. The project is to focus on the fragility of democracy; critical thinking, the need for substantive expression in democracy for knowledge, and against power.

Creusa: *"Ah, women still. Born to suffer. God's to work with their will! How else? What help is there when those who make mistakes that strikes us are our judges too?"*

*About the drama and theater of ancient times: Mythology and Reason:* The Greek tragedies had mythology as the starting point for the narrative / drama. The gods mirrored generally the human qualities. As godly personifications, the people could recognize human characteristics. Destiny, and the human being as unfree, as the "playball" of the gods, were pre-democratic relations with mythology and the gods.

This changes in the time of democracy and "reason", where our cultural cradle is formed. In the theater, the citizen took party, felt anger, sadness, contempt, and found right and wrong in what was going on.

It was a point that the spectator could scream, bow and shout to the gods/ characters, and so collectively be identified with each other, such as "we agree on each other's perception." This was to strengthen the community's sense of the fellowship, sharing and talking about their experiences after a performance. The democrats should reflect on themselves, which also helped to remove themselves from the gods, and to "reason" political thoughts and the Athenian philosophy and culture to evolve. The theater was in this way important for democratic development, as a free institution of speech and thought. Preventing the individualistic "free-will" was a cause of establishing democracy, as a limitation of the aristocratic individuality; Greed and power. Individualism represented in the developing phase of democracy - the danger of tyranny. <sup>1</sup>

Euripides: Euripides's motivation to show that human beings have free will, but it is limited by the environment and culture in which it grows. The ancient culture of Euripides had become such a limitation. But, democracy were a precondition for Euripides to write "Ion" at all. My eyes have been to see "Ion" in the time and the "political situation" that was written. This actualizes "Ion" also today.

A few years after the play was set up in 413 BC., Euripides flees or is expelled from Athens. This is just a few years before Socrates was executed in 399 BC., either flies or is

"Ion": Apollon is silent through the play. At the end of the play, Creusa is blessing Apollon. Does that show that a mothers love for her child is greater than the love to the gods? Does it show that she understands that the gods are no better than people. Or does it show that she still has to settle down, and be a part of the culture if she wants to live in the city?

Athena: It is the good Athena that stands out and rescues this from becoming a tragedy: Creusa will kill "Ion", unaware of who he is. Apollon remains silent throughout the play. And here we are at one of the points of Euripides, I think. One can't trust the gods, man has to trust himself and not be fooled. "Power" can in turn choose not to say anything.

The French thinker Michel Foucault claimed that the theme of "Ion" was expression, free speech, truth and reason. The gods and power can exercise freely, unless man can speak. Apollon is speechless, because he can't escape his revealing. Is Euripides's choice of Athena, a conscious choice to curb the possible irritation of the Athenians? It *can* be wrong to make such a suggestion.

Women's Suppression: In attempt to do Euripides's right as contemporary dramatist, "Ion" has

to be seen into a larger (interdisciplinary) context. The piece is (possibly) written as a strong criticism of mythology, using the mythological story of Ion in itself. She can't speak about her situation, and the gods do as they please. Women in democracy today have a similar status as Creusa, which also can be difficult to discuss today. In the "why?", one reveals the democratic culture. Evripides sympathetically expresses in several plays expressions for the woman's good intellect and poor position.

*Democrat criticism:* In addition to promoting the woman as mythologically and democratically suppressed, the play can imply a criticism of democracy, or rather the democrats as such. Imperialist "individual" choices made by a warlike democracy makes the citizen a complacent tyrant who choose unwise in relation to himself and neighbouring city-states.

Here are my reasons for such an assumption: Evripides was the most political and philosophical of the dramatists, and friend of Socrates. He was one of the dramatists who "detached" his drama to the greatest extent from the mythological. When Evripides writes "Ion" between 418-412BC., the great age of Athens had become unsound as carrieristic and populist. Does it matter to him that the Erectheion temple is being built (421-406 BC.)? Does he see a hubris at this time, being angry at their neighbors? <sup>2</sup>

The city had been in war with Sparta since 431 BC. It had wiped out other cities that wanted to be neutral, like Melos (416 BC.), and listened little to their allies. Athens had terrorized cities and villages for decades, especially against allies of Sparta on the Peloponnese. I think Evripides looked at the other Greek people as the Athenians' brothers, as Creusa and Xuthus "become parents" of the Greek people; the Dorians and the Acheaians: At the same time, it can be interpreted that Evripides holds the Athenians as the purest and original "Greeks", like virgin sons of the Attic soil, of Athens and Hefaistos-; a criticism of the advances of massacres and raids the Athenians have "effectuated" against their "brothers". It was the Dorians and Acheaians who were Athens enemies in the Peloponnese war.

In the midst of the nearly 30 year war in 415 BC., Athens sets off with hundreds of ships against Syracuse, voted by the democracy (for) led by politician and Olympia winner Alcibiades, the youth of the Platon Dialogue, who betrays his city twice. He refers to the victories over the Persians at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea two generations earlier. The attack on Syracuse and the attempt to take all of Sicily ends with a loss of the entire fleet and approximately 30,000 young Athenians. In 404 BC., Athens opens its gates for the Spartans. The bad climate it was to call for "moderation" among powerful democratic Athenians, makes it meaningful to ask if Athens at this time actually behaved and "felt like one", as Plato says makes a tyranny. If one or many people think the same, it is like one.

Freedom of expression: Evripides is the earliest source of the term parrhesia, which means bold, fearless, true speech. It forms the basic principle of democracy, practical and logical. Parrhesia and democracy's purpose and productive power-can be a continuous and factually critical discourse. For example, we can compare it with the need for "warning"/ "whistle-blowing"; that someone is telling the truth, by risk.

Michel Foucault has treated Evripides as a dramatist who played a major role in contemporary democratic reflection, and it is Foucault who has brought forward the parrhesia-concept in our time. Parrhesia is a subject of research in academy, in seeing the formation and communication of ancient times in a new light. "Ion" was an important part of M. Foucault documentation in this regard.

*Change in the democratic culture:* Research shows in fairly consensus that democratic Athens went from being a democracy before The Peloponnesian war - with a greater "tolerance" for debate, brevity and problematization, than after the war. In the rebuilding time, after the Persian war, 50 years earlier, the democratic issues were of a new date, and the aristocratic values represented the traditional "opposite" values. Here there were room to "battle" these values, staking out a new course, and new values were to be established. By the end of Socrates and Evripide's life, Athens was politically turbulent; politically and cultural bewildered; democracy had failed, increased wealth and specialization, and individualism and careerism had allowed room for "common people" to seek power.

#### Timeless "democratic" similarities

As we see today, freedom and power seem to make it difficult for us to stand up with knowledge and our opinions for fear: Being stamped as disloyal, how one's exertions (the organization) against power are creatively classified as a threat of the wellbeing and stabilizing in the culture/organisation/community. In this culture you crush the people who speak, because power is "threatened". One quickly classifies a "personal problem", "security-problem", a threat for the "wellbeing", an "activist", an "ungodly"/"disbelief", as "populistic". The common is not talking about the subject, but in labelling the "opponent".

Was Evripides a *parrhesiastes*, like Socrates? One who wanted to make them go away from the gods, spot the woman's lack of rights, and one's own foolishness, religious and political? Political, bureaucratic, artistic, academic and religious correctness is dangerous for development and democracy. This may have been Evripide's points.

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<sup>11</sup> Ryan K. Balot: «

<sup>2</sup> (Prof. George Gilbert Murray, (Oxford) claims the play was set in 413 BC.)