1) Aristophanes *Frogs* 1069-1077 (404 BC, trans. Sommerstein):

AESCHYLUS: Then again you [i.e. Euripides] have taught people the habit of chatter and babble, which has emptied the wrestling-schools and worn down young men's buttocks as they sit blabbering – and has encouraged the crew of the *Paralus* [i.e. lower class warship rowers (*thetes*)] to talk back to their officers. Why, in the old days, when I was alive, all they knew how to do was call for their grub and shout “yo-ho”!

DIONYSUS: Yes, by Apollo, and also to fart in the face of the bottom-bench charlie, to smear a messmate with shit, and to go ashore and nick someone’s clothes. Now they dispute their orders and won’t row any more; they sail first this way and then back that way.


‘...People find fault with the Athenians because there are occasions when it is impossible to get a matter dealt with by the Council or the Assembly... This happens... because there is such pressure of business that it is not possible to deal with everyone who raises a point. How could they do so when they have so many obligations? They celebrate more festivals than any other Greek city, during which there is even less possibility of transacting public business.[...] The Athenians have to hold festivals, during which no trials can take place, and they have twice as many as other states. [...] The common people (*dēmos*) realise that it is not possible for each of the poor to sacrifice, hold feasts and build shrines and to run a beautiful and great city, but they have found a way of having sacrifices, rites, festivals and sanctuaries: they make frequent public sacrifices as a city, but it is the people (*dēmos*) who enjoy the feasts and to whom the victims [i.e. the meat of the sacrificial animals] are allotted.’

3) Questioning the gods and religion in Euripides:


ION: [...] Raping and then abandoning virgins? Secretly fathering children and then nonchalantly letting them die? You should be the last to do this, Phoebus [Apollo]: you have the power, so you should make virtue your goal. Human wickedness is punished by the gods, so how can it be right for you gods to make laws for us and then be guilty of breaking those same laws yourselves? [...] if you and Poseidon and Zeus, the lord of the heavens, are going to be brought to book by humans for all the rapes you’ve committed, the penalties will empty your temples [...] It stops being fair to call men ‘bad’ if all we’re doing is imitating what’s acceptable behaviour among the gods.

Euripides *Bacchae* 1344-49, (trans. Morwood, p. 82):

CADMUS: Dionysus, we beseech you, we have wronged you.

DIONYSUS: You have understood me too late. You did not known me when you should have.

CADMUS: We realize that. But you have come down on us with too heavy a punishment.

DIONYSUS: Yes, for I, a god, was treated with outrage (*hubris*) by you.

CADMUS: It is not fitting that gods should be like mortals in their rage.

DIONYSUS: My father Zeus long ago assented to these things.

Fragment from lost Euripides play, fr. 1018: The mind (*nous*) that is in each of us is a god (*theos*).

4) Euripides *Bacchae* 1115-1122:

MESSENGER: [...] But he flung the band from his head so that the wretched Agave could recognize him and not kill him, and he touched her cheek, saying: ‘It’s me mother, your son Pentheus, whom you bore in the house of Echion. O mother, pity me and do not kill me for what I have done wrong [lit. ‘for my *hamartai* (errors)’].

Aristotle *Poetics* ch. 13 (360-320 BC, trans. Halliwell, adapted): ‘We are left, then, with the figure who falls between these types. Such a man is one who is not preeminent in virtue and justice, and who falls into affliction
not because of evil and wickedness, but because of a certain fallibility/error (hamartia). He will belong to the class of those who enjoy great esteem and prosperity, such as Oedipus, Thyestes and outstanding men from such families.’

5) Euripidean aetiology of alliances, cults and social norms:

Suppliant Women 1209-1213: ATHENA: [...] And you are to leave the place by the Isthmian crossroads, where the bodies were purified by fire, just as it is, a precinct sacred to the god.

Hippolytus 1422-31, (trans. Morwood, p.79): ARTEMIS: I shall give you the greatest honours in the city of Trozen. Unwed girls will cut their hair in tribute to you before their marriage, and throughout the length of time you will reap your reward from the deepest sorrow of their tears. And the maidens’ care for you will always find expression in song, so that Phaedra’s love for you will not slip into silence and die without a name.

6) CHORUS at Bacchae 417-31 (trans. Morwood):

The god, the son of Zeus, rejoices in festivities, and he loves Peace, bringer of prosperity, the goddess who rears children. He gives to rich and humble an equal share in the pleasure of wine which banishes sorrow. But he hates the man to whom it means nothing to live a blessed life to the end by day and happy night, and to keep one’s heart and mind in wisdom away from haughty men. Whatever ordinary people have thought it right to live by, that I would accept.


HERALD: [...]The polis from which I come is ruled by one man, not a rabble. It’s impossible for anyone to make our city over-confident and turn it this way and that for his private gain. In the short term, such a man finds favour by his gross flattery, and even later when he does the city harm, he conceals his earlier mistakes behind false promises and escapes punishment. Besides, how could the common people correctly govern a city when they can’t even correctly assess a speech? [...]Hope is unreliable, and has often brought states to war by stirring up excessive anger. For when the people are to vote for or against war, no one takes into consideration the possibility that he himself may die, but diverts this misfortune on to someone else. If death were visible as votes were cast, Greece would never be destroyed by the madness of war. And yet, when faced with two arguments we can all recognize what is good and what is bad, and how much better peace is for us than war.

8) Look at Aethra’s speech and Theseus’ change of mind at Suppliants 297-365 (Morwood, pp147-8).

Even further reading and underpinning research for this talk:
(Email jph4@st-andrews.ac.uk for pdf attachments of these by reply)

