Write a 750-word essay on the following question. Your essay is due in CLA 251 by 4 PM on MONDAY September 13. Be sure to include a title (not on a separate page). Please single space and print your essay on both sides of a single sheet of paper.

Many argue that representative democracy is a necessary but not sufficient form of government. They claim that the institutions and ideals of representative democracy need to be supplemented with those of participatory democracy.

But this begs a prior question: Is participatory democracy desirable in the first place? Are its normative aspirations and institutional forms worth fighting for? Use evidence and reasoning from Aristophanes, Ober, Bryan, Aristotle, and Spitz to support your claims.

A Note on Improving Persuasiveness in the Micro-Essay Format

What do I mean by a “micro-essay”?
Micro-essays are short (650-850 words) analytical essays in which the writer explores a specific problem or larger issue. In the micro-essay, the writer expresses an overall claim and then proceeds to defend the claim, often by anticipating objections to that very claim or how it is defended. The micro-essay format is designed to improve the student’s ability to argue a point effectively—a skill essential in almost every other form of writing. An excellent approach in many varieties of writing and micro-essays is to begin by carefully defining one’s terms. Often the most effective essays rest on a key distinction, e.g., where the reader may have assumed participatory democracy meant one thing, you will argue that it really means two .... Thus, “The dictionary defines participation as the act of sharing in the exercise of authority. But those who defend the importance of participation to democracy have emphasized, with Aristotle, that citizens share not only authority but also the collective transformation of their ends from mere living to living well.”

1. Setting up the context of the problem/addressing your audience
With our micro-essays, we will assume an audience of class members. Thus, explaining the larger significance of the problem/issue is not necessary and you can simply assume an audience of scholars who are already familiar with the texts and context under concern. Good micro-essay writers try to limit introductory remarks to the first sentence.

2. Stating your claims about the problem simply
Whatever the overall issue, good writers often want to make a number of claims—either in support or opposition—about how some authority has approached or addressed the problem. For the writer, the choice of claims is an important strategic issue because persuasiveness is often a function of both the quantity of claims made and their quality. It is not a bad idea to include a brief summary in the introductory paragraph of all the claims to follow in the essay.
3. Using evidence to support your claims
At the very least, each claim should be supported with evidence. In general writing, evidence comes in many forms: a personal story (anecdote); survey results; matters of fact; a specific example followed by logical analysis of how the example may be generalized; etc. But in a political theory class, the most important source of evidence is direct quotation from the text. Be sure to include a page reference for each textual citation. Page references can simply be included in parentheses at the end of the sentence—since we are all using the same texts.

4. Anticipating plausible objections to your claims
Persuasiveness depends not only on the quality and aptness of your evidence, but also on acknowledging the potential weak points in your analysis and plausible objections to your claims. Nothing disarms a reader more than a writer who thinks ahead and supplies a version of the reader’s own objection into the essay; nothing persuades such readers more than encountering their objections fairly and charitably related. Although supplying plausible objections to your own position takes time, and the ability to think outside your usual views, the practice adds invaluable weight and quality to your claims.

5. Delivering the knock-out rejoinder
Once you have provided the objection, proceed immediately to show why it is not in fact so plausible or much of an objection after all. You are not able to offer as many claims when you provide objections and rejoinders, but you more thoroughly cover the ground you do cover. I strongly recommend that you include at least one claim in every micro-essay you write.