

Humanities I

Unit 14: City and Empires: A Value Dilemma

When you are reading this unit bear in mind the dilemmas of the Paris Peace Talks.

Discussion, study notes.

- 1) What problem did the people of Melos face?
- 2) What arguments did the Athenians give to persuade the Melians to submit?
- 3) Do you think the Athenians acted morally in this case? If they acted immorally, why did they act as they did? Should practical reasons out-weigh morality sometimes?

Try to find evidence throughout history and of current times where this exact situation is evidenced.

For example, Henry V after Agincourt used the same kind of bargaining power. (See not only history books, but Shakespeare's play Henry V, for some very fine and uniquely political speeches.)

DEBATE:

The basic arguments in favor of and against submission have now been presented. The class will be divided into two groups: Groups 1 & 2 will disregard what the Melians ultimately decided to do and pretend that they have been called upon to make a decision as the Melian Council of Elders. Group 1 will take the position that the Melians should submit; Group 2 should argue against submission. Group 1 must deliberate until it can agree upon a statement to defend its position. A secretary should be selected to report and to record the statement and read it out to Group 2. Now, Group 2 must deliberate the statement and respond to Group 1's statement in response. Each side will then have a prepared and well reasoned statement, the debate may continue this way until a final decision can be made to the satisfaction of the majority.

(This debate issue is not unlike, in too many ways, the containment policy promoted by the U.S. against the Communism of Indo-China. Find examples both political and ethical that reveal a similarity. How many examples in history can you find when this type of decision has been forced upon nations and races?)