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LABOUR AND STATUS IN CLASSICAL ATHENS: THE CASE OF THE UNSPECIALIZED WAGE-LABOURER*

ABSTRACT

*In the philosophical works of the Athenian elite, wage-labour was scorned for being incompatible with personal freedom and the practice of virtue. This line of thinking, however, economic historians recently exposed as idiosyncratic, since wage-labour in Athens has been shown to be extensive and potentially a source of high prestige. Considering the importance of specialization (*tekhnê*) in labour, this article focusses on the social status of a category that is usually overlooked—namely, those wage-labourers who would be deemed unspecialized. Through a close examination of popular literature, it is argued that the attitudes of elite and non-elite Athenians partially converged, since the latter looked with disdain not upon wage-labour in general but upon unspecialized wage-labour in particular.*

Keywords: labour; specialization; wage-labourers; social status; Athens

Economic historians have recently demonstrated that wage-labour in classical Athens was not only extensive but also characterized by a high level of horizontal specialization, which in turn created full-time occupations, and that professionals in performing arts, education, medicine and sculpture could attain a remarkably high status.[1] Furthermore, with regard to crafts (or the so-called 'banausic trades'), the attitude 'that one should work hard and strive to maximize output and grow wealthy, so long as one did not act unjustly' has been shown to be representative of popular thinking already from the Archaic period.[2] Nevertheless, the picture of the social status of wage-labourers has long been muddled by the assessments of their livelihood found in works that pursue a philosophical agenda. In this regard, demonstrating that the scorn of Plato, Xenophon

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[1] See E.M. Harris, 'Workshop, household and marketplace', in P. Cartledge, E. Cohen and L. Foxhall (edd.), *Money, Land and Labour in Ancient Greece* (London, 2002), 67–99, and the relevant contributions in Stewart, Harris and Lewis. For the extended employment opportunities for craftsmen in Athens during the fifth century B.C.E, see H. Hochscheid, 'Foreign labour, common ground: the value of craftspeople in early democratic Athens', in Fohr and Bowes, 289–310, at 290–300, with bibliography.

[2] See D.M. Lewis, 'Labor and employment', in J. Neils and D.K. Rogers (edd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens* (Cambridge, 2021), 217–30, quotation from 227–8. On the semantic history of βάναυσος and its cognates, see F. Bourriot, *Banausos – Banausia et la situation des artisans en Grèce classique* (Hildesheim, 2015).

and Aristotle for wage-labourers did not represent a popular attitude, Lewis concluded that 'the role of skill as a driver of social status will require further exploration, especially among the working population of Attica'.[3]

In keeping with Lewis's proposed avenue of exploration, this article focusses on the social status of a category of wage-labourers that is usually overlooked—namely, those who would be deemed unspecialized. Specialized labour is recognized as such in every society based on subjective criteria, and for Athens this was reflected in the debate about what activity falls on the spectrum of *tekhnê*.[4] Within this framework, the term 'unspecialized' could be used to describe the types of work deemed devoid of *tekhnê* by the denizens of Attica. For example, in Aristotle's discussion of money-making (χρηματιστική), the part of wage-earning (μισθαρνία) is divided between that of craftsmen (βάναυσοι) and that of unspecialized labourers (ἄτεχνοι), who 'are useful exclusively by means of their body' (*Pol.* 1258b τῷ σώματι μόνῳ χρησίμων).[5] As we shall see, despite this notional division in wage-earning occupations, to labour for wages was contemptible *tout court* in the eyes of the elite. But what can be said about how Athenian wage-labourers viewed their unspecialized peers, such as those congregating at the area known as the 'Labourers' Kolonos' in hopes of finding employment for the day?[6] Correspondingly, what would Athenian craftsmen think of their unspecialized compatriots working by their side in the extensive building programme instigated by Pericles?[7] An enquiry into the status conferred by unspecialized wage-labour in Athenian popular culture will reveal that its practitioners, unlike their specialized peers, were looked down on by elites and non-elites alike.[8]

[3] D.M. Lewis, 'Labour specialization in the Athenian economy: occupational hazards', in Stewart, Harris and Lewis, 129–74, at 157–8.

[4] Similarly, the Athenian discourse on what constitutes τέχνη as well as the status of the various τεχνίται was anything but conclusive; see S. Cuomo, *Technology and Culture in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2007), 7–40; E. Stewart, 'Introduction', in Stewart, Harris and Lewis, 1–25, at 1–7; T.K. Johansen, 'Introduction', in T.K. Johansen (ed.), *Productive Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy: The Concept of* Technê (Cambridge, 2021), 1–14.

[5] For a discussion of this passage vis-à-vis Aristotle's political philosophy, see E. Schütrumpf, *Aristoteles: Politik I* (Berlin, 1991), 358–9. The same idea about menial labour and its implications for a person's freedom was apparently also shared by Roman elites; cf. Cic. *Off.* 1.150 *illiberales autem et sordidi quaestus mercennariorum omnium, quorum operae, non quorum artes emuntur; est enim in illis ipsa merces auctoramentum seruitutis* ('unfit for a freeborn and vulgar moreover is the occupation of all hired labourers, who are hired for manual labour and not a craft; for them, the very wage is a pledge to slavery'). For our sources' overall outlook on hired labour in the Greek and Roman worlds, see G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca, NY, 1981), 185–8.

[6] For the Κολωνὸς μίσθιος (or ἐργατικός) in the Agora, cf. Σ^{VErM} Ar. *Av.* 997; Σ Aeschin. 1.125; Harp. s.v. κολωνέτας; Suda s.v. κολωνέτας; Poll. *Onom.* 7.132–3; A. Fuks, 'Κολωνὸς μίσθιος: labour exchange in classical Athens', *Eranos* 49 (1951), 171–3. Although the references to Κολωνὸς μίσθιος do not specify whether one would find Athenian citizens in the crowds of prospective μισθωτοί, there is no reason to assume that such a labour market would be exclusive to metics and slaves. For example, Xenophon presents a former Athenian cleruch with no family property in Attica as forced to work with his body for a living after his repatriation at the end of the Peloponnesian War; see *Mem.* 2.8.1 ἀναγκάζομαι νῦν ἐπιδημήσας τῷ σώματι ἐργαζόμενος τὰ ἐπιτήδεια πορίζεσθαι with Bandini and Dorion, 248–9.

[7] According to Plutarch, Pericles devised a building programme so as for 'the mass of craftsmen not to be without a share in public receipts' (βάναυσον ὄχλον οὔτ' ἄμοιρον εἶναι λημμάτων, *Vit. Per.* 12.5), while 'each craft … employed a throng of hired laymen' (ἑκάστη δὲ τέχνη … τὸν θητικὸν ὄχλον καὶ ἰδιώτην συντεταγμένον εἶχεν, 12.7) who also shared in the profits. For Plutarch's reliability as a source on the logistics and motivation behind the Periclean building programme, see Hochscheid (n. 1), 290–2, 300–3.

[8] The meaning of terms such as 'popular culture' and 'elites' is notoriously elusive, with the former being especially unusual in democratic Athens; see H.N. Parker, 'Toward a definition of popular

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Popular thinking on wage-labour incorporated elements of the elite perspective, so a summary of the latter should be our point of departure. In so far as those around Socrates (and their students) were representative of the Athenian elite, their take on wage-labour (regardless of specialization, or lack thereof) was that it undermines a man's autonomy and impedes his ability to be a good citizen.[9] Regarding the issue of autonomy, wage-labour was considered incompatible with personal freedom, and the economic dependence characterizing the life of a wage-labourer was thought tantamount to slavery. In one of the dialogues attributed to Plato, an unnamed man claims that, while a philosopher should have knowledge of crafts, he should not be as knowledgeable as their respective practitioners 'but on the level appropriate to a free and educated man' (*Amat*. 135d ἀλλ' ὡς εἰκὸς ἄνδρα ἐλεύθερόν τε καὶ πεπαιδευμένον). Likewise, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, although Aristarchus, an impoverished member of the Athenian elite, deplores the dire financial situation of his family at the end of the Peloponnesian War, he defends the immiserating abstention of his dependants from wage-labour on the ground that they are 'educated in what befits free people' (ἐλευθερίως πεπαιδευμένους, 2.7.4).[10] In the same vein, Aristotle emphatically argues that 'a free man does not live for the sake of another' (ἐλευθέρου γὰρ τὸ μὴ πρὸς ἄλλον ζῆν, *Rh*. 1367a). As regards the performance of citizenship, the Elean in Plato's *Statesman* asserts (to Socrates' agreement) that one 'shall never find hirelings and *thêtes*, who readily serve anyone, among those partaking in the art of rulership' (ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μήν, οὕς γε ὁρῶμεν μισθωτοὺς καὶ θῆτας πᾶσιν ἑτοιμότατα ὑπηρετοῦντας, μή ποτε βασιλικῆς μεταποιουμένους εὕρωμεν, 290a).[11] Likewise, in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, after highlighting their

culture', *History and Theory* 50.2 (2011), 147–70; M. Canevaro, 'The popular culture of the Athenian institutions: "authorized" popular culture and "unauthorized" elite culture in classical Athens', in L. Grig (ed.), *Popular Culture in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 2017), 39–65. For the sake of clarification, given the nature of our sources, by 'popular culture' I mean the ideas and ideals which we find expressed in works aimed at large and heterogeneous audiences, not exclusively consisting of 'elites', whom I take to be the πλούσιοι of Athens. For the πένητες–πλούσιοι division in the public discourse of the Athenian *dêmos*, emphasizing the distinct lifestyle and civic role of each group, see D.M. Pritchard, 'The social structure of democratic Athens', in C. Diogo de Souza and M. Aparecida de Oliveira Silva (edd.), *Morte e Vida na Grécia Antiga* (Teresina, 2020), 102–32.

[9] For the philosophical ideas on labour expressed by Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle as well as for their distorting effect on the reception of classical antiquity regarding the history of labour, see the detailed discussion by C. Lis and H. Soly, *Worthy Efforts: Attitudes to Work and Workers in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden, 2012), 13–53.

[10] On the elite character of the education implied in the passage, see Bandini and Dorion, 242.

[11] As early as the epics of Homer (*Il*. 21.443–5; *Od*. 4.643–4, 11.488–91, 18.354–9) and Hesiod (*Op*. 600–5), the term θής denoted a free person associated with landlessness and seasonal agricultural activities requiring hired labour. In Athens, although the term became the name for one of the four Solonian property classes, it was mostly employed to describe one who worked for wages; see V.J. Rosivach, 'The *thêtes* in Thucydides 6.43.1', *Hermes* 140 (2012), 131–9; A. Jacquemin, 'D'une condition sociale à un statut politique, les ambiguïtés du thète', *Ktèma* 38 (2013), 7–13. The thetic condition is conflated with slavery in lexica (cf. Hesychius s.v. θής· δοῦλος, μισθωτός, παράσιτος, ἢ ὁ τὴν μισθαρνικὴν ἐργαζόμενος παρὰ Ἀθηναίοις ['*thês*: slave, wage-labourer, parasite or the one engaging in wage-earning in Athens'], θητεύει· δουλεύει μισθῷ ['*thêteuei*: slaves away for a wage']), but a distinction between slaves and θῆτες is already attested in Homer; see *Od*. 4.643–4 Ἰθάκης ἐξαίρετοι, ἦ ἑοὶ αὐτοῦ | θῆτές τε δμῶές τε; ('Ithaca's chosen young men, or his *thêtes* and slaves?). For the distinct meaning of θής in Athens, cf. also Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.9.2 ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ ὑπεροπτικῶς ἐχρῶντο τοῖς πελάταις ἔργα τε ἐπιτάττοντες οὐ προσήκοντα ἐλευθέροις . . . ἐκάλουν δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι μὲν θῆτας τοὺς πελάτας ἐπὶ τῆς λατρείας ('they [*sc.* the patricians] treated their clients with disdain and imposed on them duties unfit for free men . . . the Athenians called their clients *thêtes* owing to their hired service'); Poll. *Onom.* 3.82 πελάται δὲ καὶ θῆτες ἐλευθέρων ἐστὶν ὀνόματα διὰ πενίαν ἐπ᾽ ἀργυρίῳ δουλευόντων ('clients and *thêtes* are the names of free people slaving away for wages out of poverty').

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detrimental effect on the body and mind of men, Socrates declares that 'the crafts called banausic are disgraceful and held in utter disdain in *poleis*' (αἵ γε βαναυσικαὶ καλούμεναι [*sc*. τέχναι] καὶ ἐπίρρητοί εἰσι καὶ εἰκότως μέντοι πάνυ ἀδοξοῦνται πρὸς τῶν πόλεων, 4.3).[12] Finally, assuming that wage-labour, as practised by both craftsmen (βάναυσοι) and unspecialized labourers (θῆτες), debases free men and renders them unable to practise virtue (ἀρετή), Aristotle considered the thetic class on the whole to be unfit for citizenship rights.[13]

For the non-elite perspective on wage-labour, in general, our sources afford scanty direct evidence on the status of its practitioners, which appears to have been positive.[14] None the less, a close examination of works in genres that expressed or appealed to shared collective values, such as oratory and drama, illuminates the complexities of the issue.[15] In this regard, the funeral oration of Pericles, as presented by Thucydides, provides a crucial piece of information on the background against which Athenians would have viewed labour.[16] Specifically, Pericles claims that in Athens 'it is not a shame for one to acknowledge poverty, but the greater shame is for one not to avoid it through work' (τὸ πένεσθαι οὐχ ὁμολογεῖν τινὶ αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ μὴ διαφεύγειν ἔργῳ αἴσχιον, 2.40.1). As the speech goes on to emphasize the significant social role of the politically engaged labourer, Bourriot observed that in fifth-century Athens 'work is elevated to a civic value'.[17] The attachment of civic worth to wage-labour would unavoidably enmesh a wage-labourer in a relationship with his employer (unless perhaps that was the *polis* itself) which had implications extending well beyond his economic survival, since the former's value as a citizen would directly depend on a third party. A striking example of the unease inherent in this reality appears in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, when Socrates advises Eutherus, a poor man who sold his manual labour on demand, to work for someone as a bailiff and thus secure a suitable source of income before he becomes too old and feeble. Upon hearing the recommendation, Eutherus retorts: 'I would not stand becoming a slave' (χαλεπῶς ἄν, ἔφη, ἐγώ, ὦ Σώκρατες, δουλείαν ὑπομείναιμι, 2.8.4), and further expands on his reasoning by admitting that he is unwilling to expose himself to 'any one man's censure' (ὅλως, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ ὑπαίτιον εἶναί τινι οὐ πάνυ προσίεμαι, 2.8.5), thus clarifying that what he considers slavish is answering to a *single* person.[18] Apparently, under certain circumstances, a poor Athenian would come to share the ideas of elites on wage-labour and autonomy, since it could put one in an unenviable position, and for more than economic reasons to boot.

[12] For the philosophical idea undergirding this passage and for its parallels in the work of Plato, see S.B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Xenophon: Oeconomicus. A Social and Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1994), 235–7.

[13] Arist. *Pol*. 1278a, 1337b. For the use of the term θής by Aristotle, see de Ste. Croix (n. 5), 182–5.

[14] A glimpse of direct evidence is caught in the signatures of practitioners of high-level τέχναι, such as sculpture and painting, on their creations, which suggest that quality craftsmanship was a source of pride as well as popularity: J.M. Hurwit, *Artists and Signatures in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 2015); N. Massar, 'The craftsman's view: labour and (self-)appreciation as reflected in signatures', in Fohr and Bowes, 311–38.

[15] For the type of sources that speak to the ideology of mass audiences, see J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton, 1989), 43–52.

[16] For the ideological discourse undergirding Pericles' funeral oration, see D. Lenfant, 'The Funeral Oration as a self-portrait of Athenian democracy', in D.M. Pritchard (ed.), *The Athenian Funeral Oration after Nicole Loraux* (Cambridge, 2024), 357–75.

[17] Bourriot (n. 2), 27: 'le travail est érigé en valeur civique'.

[18] On the contrasting ideas about rulership and accountability entertained by Socrates and Eutherus, respectively, see Bandini and Dorion, 249–50.

At this point, as we turn to the non-elite perspective on unspecialized wage-labour, it would be pertinent to highlight a distinction between the different types of wage-labour drawn by Aristotle, since this distinction represents an additional ideological confluence between elites and non-elites. Specifically, Aristotle divided the groups that constitute every *polis* into five parts (μέρη) in terms of occupation: farmers (γεωργικόν), craftsmen (βάναυσον), traders (ἀγοραῖον), *thêtes* (θητικόν) and warriors (προπολεμῆσον).[19] A brief commentary is provided on the function and usefulness of each part with the exception of that of the *thêtes*, who stand here for unspecialized wage-labourers.[20] Meanwhile, the craftsmen are said to engage in the 'arts without which it is impossible for a *polis* to be inhabited' (τὰς τέχνας ὧν ἄνευ πόλιν ἀδύνατον οἰκεῖσθαι, *Pol*. 1291a), whereas the *thêtes* receive only nominal mention. This implicit distinction of specialized and unspecialized wage-labour in terms of civic worth might seem like an extra layer of elitist bias, but comedy—one of our major sources on Athenian popular culture—suggests that everyday Athenians thought about specialization and civic worth in similar terms.[21]

In Aristophanes' *Wealth*, after Chremylus restores the eyesight of Plutus, the previously uneven distribution of wealth between honest and dishonest men shifts. This turn of events has an unnamed *sykophantês* rush to Chremylus' house to complain, but there he is accosted by a formerly poor (also unnamed) Honest Man, who had arrived earlier to dedicate the rugs of his poverty days to the god. Given that in the play's context the wretched state of the incoming *sykophantês* immediately gives away his moral character, as the Honest Man and the slave Carion mock him, the following conversation ensues (898–906):[22]

> Συκ. ταῦτ᾽ οὖν ἀνασχέτ᾽ ἐστὶν, ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ θεοί,
> τούτους ὑβρίζειν εἰς ἔμ᾽; οἴμ᾽ ὡς ἄχθομαι
> ὅτι χρηστὸς ὢν καὶ φιλόπολις πάσχω κακῶς.
> Δικ. σὺ φιλόπολις καὶ χρηστός; Συκ. ὡς οὐδείς γ᾽ ἀνήρ.
> Δικ. καὶ μὴν ἐπερωτηθεὶς ἀπόκριναί μοι. Συκ. τὸ τί;
> Δικ. γεωργὸς εἶ; Συκ. μελαγχολᾶν μ᾽ οὕτως οἴει;
> Δικ. ἀλλ᾽ ἔμπορος; Συκ. ναί, σκήπτομαί γ᾽, ὅταν τύχω.
> Δικ. τί δαί; τέχνην τιν᾽ ἔμαθες; Συκ. οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία.
> Δικ. πῶς οὖν διέζης ἢ πόθεν μηδὲν ποιῶν;

SYK. Are these things bearable, oh Zeus and gods, these two here insulting me? How vexed I am for suffering like this, being a good and patriotic man. HON. You, a patriotic and good man? SYK. Like no other! HON. Well, then, answer my questions. SYK. About what? HON. Are you a farmer? SYK. You take me to be so barmy? HON. A trader? SYK. Yes—I pretend at any rate to be one, whenever it comes to it. HON. So, what? Have you learned some sort of craft? SYK. No, by Zeus. HON. How, then, did you make a living or from what, *doing nothing*?

[19] See Arist. *Pol*. 1290a–1291b.

[20] Each occupational μέρος and its function in Aristotelian thought are discussed in detail by E. Schütrumpf and H.-J. Gehrke, *Aristoteles: Politik IV–VI* (Berlin, 1996), 265–9. For an analysis of the real-life relationship between a *polis* and its τεχνίται as one of mutual need and respect, see N. Massar, 'Skilled workers in the ancient Greek city: public employment, selection methods, and evaluation', in Stewart, Harris and Lewis, 68–93.

[21] On the value of comedy as a document of Athenian popular culture, see D.M. Pritchard, 'Aristophanes and de Ste. Croix: the value of Old Comedy as evidence for Athenian popular culture', *Antichthon* 46 (2012), 14–51.

[22] For συκοφάνται in Athenian society, see D. Harvey, 'The sykophant and sykophancy: vexatious redefinition?', in P. Cartledge, P. Millett and S.R. Todd (edd.), *Nomos: Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990), 103–21.

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Although a product of comic imagination, this dialogue poses as an exchange between two non-elite Athenians; thus, provided that its dramatic success depends on its content being representative of popular thinking, its implications for the social status of wage-labourers demand closer attention.[23] After each question about the possible occupations of 'a good and patriotic man' (χρηστὸς καὶ φιλόπολις) is met with a cynically negative response, the question concluding the examination of the *sykophantês* is considerably loaded.[24] The Honest Man offers various options that would substantiate one's claim to a life of honour in terms of occupation and, although specialized wage-labour makes it on the list (τέχνην τιν' ἔμαθες;), unspecialized wage-labour is conspicuously absent. In addition, the feigned aporia (since morally dubious activities are, obviously, excluded) as to how one who was not involved in farming, trade or craftsmanship earned a livelihood suggests that these three were the only occupational options conceivable for an Athenian citizen who wished to claim civic worth. Consequently, it appears that non-elite Athenians, much like their elite counterparts, perceived unspecialized wage-labour to be unfit for a citizen.

Besides playing on the notion of an incompatibility between unspecialized wage-labour and citizenship in mainstream Athenian thought, comedy also suggests that a citizen engaging in this kind of labour was an object of general contempt. This idea is most clearly expressed in Aristophanes' *Wasps*, when Bdelycleon attempts to wean his court-obsessed father, Philocleon, off court-service in a contest adjudicated by Philocleon's like-minded peers who form the Chorus. One of the arguments Bdelycleon employs is the demeaning nature of Philocleon's favourite pastime. As one might expect from someone espousing elitist ideals, Bdelycleon argues that, by being at the beck and call of self-serving orators for the sake of getting the three obols of court-pay, the elderly judges subject themselves to a state of slavery (682–95) and they are robbed blind of the wealth brought in by the empire they helped build long ago (698-711).[25] More importantly, however, Bdelycleon's attack against court service culminates in the claim that judges follow the orators who hold their pay 'like olive-pickers' (712 ὥσπερ ἐλαολόγοι χωρεῖθ' ἅμα τῷ τὸν μισθὸν ἔχοντι).[26] Here, one cannot help but wonder: if Bdelycleon wanted to impress on Philocleon and the Chorus the slavery of court service *qua* wage-labour, why of all the wage-labour options available does he choose the menial labour of a hired farmhand?[27] Evidently, this equation of court service with unspecialized wage-labour is meant to persuade the old judges that they lend themselves to an activity which compromises not only their autonomy but also their

[23] On dramatic success necessitating a multifaceted appeal to the ideas and ideals of a diverse audience, see D.K. Roselli, *Theater of the People: Spectators and Society in Ancient Athens* (Austin, 2011).

[24] As noted by A.H. Sommerstein (ed.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes: Wealth* (Warminster, 2001), 193 (on lines 903–5), a notion of civic utility seems to be underlying each of the Honest Man's questions. For the adjective χρηστός in Aristophanes denoting a man useful to the *polis* in a civic, military and political sense, see M. Casevitz, 'Autour de χρηστός chez Aristophane', in P. Thiercy and M. Menu (edd.), *Aristophane: La langue, la scène, la cité* (Bari, 1997), 445–55.

[25] As regards Bdelycleon's general demeanour, his slaves during the prologue inform us that he is a rich man of 'high-spirited-horse-snobbish ways' (ἔχων τρόπους φρυαγμοσεμνάκους, 135).

[26] Hired labour was one of the sources available to Athenian farmers in need of manpower; see Men. *Dys*. 328–31 τοῦτ' [*sc*. τὸ κτῆμα] αὐτὸς γεωργῶν διατελεῖ | μόνος, συνεργὸν δ' οὐδέν' ἀνθρώπων ἔχων, | οὐκ οἰκέτην οἰκεῖον, οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ τόπου | μισθωτόν, οὐχὶ γείτον', ἀλλ' αὐτὸς μόνος ('he farms his plot all by himself, having no man to help: no household slave, no local hired hand, no neighbour, but himself alone').

[27] For olive harvesting in Greek antiquity and its labour-intensive nature, see L. Foxhall, *Olive Cultivation in Ancient Greece: Seeking the Ancient Economy* (Oxford, 2007), 124–9.

dignity. In view of that, Philocleon's abject response (713–14) and the fact that the Chorus of poor Athenians unequivocally buy into Bdelycleon's elitist arguments (725–36) are telling.[28] Considering that the 'olive-picker' taunt proves strongly evocative even for citizens of a low economic status, its effectiveness seems to rest on unspecialized wage-labour invoking comprehensive contempt.

Other than comedy, the widespread scorn against unspecialized wage-labour in Athenian popular culture is also attested in oratory. In a forensic speech, a certain Menexenus attempts to reclaim part of his late uncle Dicaeogenes' estate, which at the time was in the hands of another Dicaeogenes, a cousin of Menexenus' late uncle. Engaging in a strategic character assassination, Menexenus focusses on the treatment of extended family members by Dicaeogenes, some of whom he is said to have robbed of their property, whereas 'others he suffered to become wage-labourers owing to lack of necessities' (τοὺς δὲ περιεώρα εἰς τοὺς μισθωτοὺς ἰόντας δι᾽ ἔνδειαν τῶν ἐπιτηδείων, Isae. 5.39). Taking into account the social composition of Athenian courts, most of the judges addressed by Menexenus were anything but strangers to the idea of working for wages.[29] Therefore, if the judges were to be convinced of Dicaeogenes' appalling treatment of his extended family, the implied kind of wage-labourer that he 'suffered' (περιεώρα) his relatives becoming was one burdened not just by poverty but also by comprehensive contempt—namely, the kind exemplified by the wage-labourer deemed unspecialized.[30]

In summary, it can be argued that the vilification of wage-labourers in absolute terms is exclusive to the writings of elite authors who criticized wage-labour on philosophical grounds for its incompatibility with personal autonomy and with what they deemed to be a proper performance of citizenship. Still, a closer look into the sources evincing the values and ideas which informed the popular culture of classical Athens reveals that unspecialized wage-labour invoked the disdain of elites as well as non-elites. This overarching, intersectional discrimination illuminates an important drive behind Athenian history. On the Athenian Acropolis, according to the Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution*, stood an ancient dedication which read: 'Anthemion the son of Diphilus dedicated this [*sc*. statue] to the gods … having exchanged the rank of *thês* for that of *hippeus*' (Διφίλου Ἀνθεμίων τήνδ᾽ ἀνέθηκε θεοῖς … θητικοῦ ἀντὶ τέλους ἱππάδ᾽ ἀμειψάμενος, 7.4).[31] Whether Anthemion plied a trade or exerted himself in unspecialized wage-labour is unknown, but the means through which an Athenian

[28] In *Wasps*, the elders constituting the Chorus are distinctly poor (300–11), and it appears that Philocleon used to be poor as well. Even though Bdelycleon, as a rich man, implores his father to retire in a luxurious life he is willing to provide (340–1, 503–6), Philocleon is not only alien to the ways of Athenian polite society (1126–264), but also sees court-pay as a way out of his material dependence on his son (612–18). For the striking socio-economic difference between father and son being the fuel for the generational conflict dramatized in the play, see N. Fisher, 'Symposiasts, fish-eaters and flatterers: social mobility and moral concerns in Old Comedy', in D. Harvey and J.M. Wilkins (edd.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (London, 2000), 355–96, at 357.

[29] On the composition of Athenian courts primarily by πένητες, see R. Sing, 'The rates of jury pay and assembly pay in fourth-century Athens', *CQ* 71 (2021), 119–34.

[30] For the adjective μισθωτός denoting unspecialized wage-labour, cf. Pl. *Resp*. 371e ἔτι δή τινες, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, εἰσὶ καὶ ἄλλοι διάκονοι, οἳ … τὴν δὲ τοῦ σώματος ἰσχὺν ἱκανὴν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόνους ἔχωσιν· οἳ δὴ πωλοῦντες τὴν τῆς ἰσχύος χρείαν, τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην μισθὸν καλοῦντες, κέκληνται, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, μισθωτοί· ἢ γάρ; ('there are, I think, some other workers, who … have sufficient bodily strength for hard labour. Those who sell the use of their strength, calling the price a "wage", I think they are called *misthôtoi*, are they not?').

[31] For a discussion of the epigram, see P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian* Athenaion Politeia (Oxford, 1993), 143–5. For another dedication from the first quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. which possibly commemorates the advancement of a θής to the rank of ζευγίτης, see A.E. Raubitschek,

could achieve such a spectacular upwards mobility during the Classical period is not. Colonies and cleruchies enabled both the haves and the have-nots to increase their economic status through the acquisition of new lands, whose allotment would either create new farmers in communities attached to the metropolis or provide increased opportunities for Athens-based rentiers.[32] The interest of poorer Athenians in moving abroad is best attested by the fifth-century decree about the colony at Brea, which famously had a proviso attached stipulating that 'the colonists shall be from the *thêtes* and the *zeugitai*' (ἐχ θετôν καὶ ζε- | [υ]γιτôν ἰέναι τὸς ἀπο- | [ί]κος, *IG* I^3 46, 44–6).[33] Taking into account the status of unspecialized wage-labourers in Athenian society, certain Athenians would be compelled to join such expansionary undertakings by their desire to flee not only from poverty but also from social stigma.[34]

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Dedications from the Athenian Acropolis: A Catalogue of the Inscriptions of the Sixth and Fifth Centuries B.C. (Cambridge, 1949), 400–1 (no. 372).

[32] For the status of Athenian settlers and cleruchs, cf. R. Zelnick-Abramovitz, 'Settlers and dispossessed in the Athenian empire', *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004), 325–45; A. Moreno, '"The Attic neighbor": the cleruchy in the Athenian empire', in J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas and R. Parker (edd.), *Interpreting the Athenian Empire* (London, 2009), 211–21.

[33] See R. Osborne and P.J. Rhodes (edd.), *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478–404 BC* (Oxford, 2017), 238–45 (no. 142).

[34] Social stigma might also be the proper background against which to read one of the provisos which Solon is said to have introduced to the law that required Athenian citizens to take care of their elderly parents (cf. Lys. 13.91; Aeschin. 1.28; Dem. 24.103–7; Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 56.6)—namely, that no son is obligated to feed his father if the latter has not taught him a craft (Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 22.1 υἱῷ τρέφειν τὸν πατέρα μὴ διδαξάμενον τέχνην ἐπάναγκες μὴ εἶναι). For the general legal and social framework affecting the relationship between fathers and sons in Athens, see N. Bernard, *Etre vieux dans le monde grec: De Solon à Philopoemen, VI^e–II^e siècles a.C.* (Bordeaux, 2023), 114–22.

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