

FREEDOM AND PATRONAGE IN THE ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: To ask a question about ‘patronage’ is to view the issue from a top-down, broadly-conceived theoretical perspective. To understand Athenian political thought, we need to take an emic approach, to consider the perspective of the Athenian citizenry, which was concerned with present realities rather than complex, abstract models. The Athenian system’s protection of individual citizens incidentally put broad restrictions on elite patronage, but, despite these limitations, relationships of patronage persisted throughout the Classical period albeit in non-threatening forms. Measures that ensured financial independence for the poor came only ad hoc and gradually. This article pursues three theses: (1) Athenians cared more about securing the freedoms of individual citizens than abolishing patronage, (2) patronage (as we would call it) existed in Athens but only in forms not threatening to civic freedoms and (3) in Athenian thinking political freedom was prior to financial independence. This article also explores the possibility of patronage systems existing in Greek *poleis* outside Athens, arguing that patronage-limiting practices were typical of democratic regimes but unusual for oligarchies.

Keywords: patronage, freedom, Athens, Greece, politics

Harking back to the halcyon days of the early democracy, Demosthenes reminded his audience that ‘the Athenians of that time did not seek out a politician or a general who would make them prosperous while reducing them to servitude; they preferred not to live at all unless they could do so in freedom’.¹ Freedom was a rallying cry.² The great reformers of the past were remembered precisely for their attempts to weaken the stranglehold of the elites over the lower classes. Solon accomplished this by ending the enslavement of the *pelatai* and *hektēmoroi* and forbidding the practice of selling citizens into bondage to repay their debts.³ Cleisthenes reorganized the demes and tribes of Attica to break up aristocratic power blocs.⁴ Only once these and other oligarchic features of the state had been removed could Pericles claim that Athenians were free to live as they pleased.⁵ Every Athenian citizen was, ideally, able to pursue his own interests without paying court to the wealthy and powerful.⁶

Yet inequalities in wealth and influence persisted, and such an imbalance in power has in many societies led to a system of ‘patronage’. This word is notoriously difficult to define, and so some theoretical groundwork must be laid. Fortunately, Richard Saller and Paul Millett have provided classical scholarship with a serviceable model.⁷ The first of Saller’s three criteria for a relationship of patronage is that it involves an exchange that is reciprocal: both parties must give and receive

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¹ Dem. 18.205: οὐ γὰρ ἐζήτουν οἱ τότε Ἀθηναῖοι οὔτε ῥήτορ’ οὔτε στρατηγὸν δι’ ὅτου δουλεύουσιν εὐτυχῶς, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ζῆν ἠξίουσι εἰ μὴ μετ’ ἐλευθερίας ἐξέσται τοῦτο ποιεῖν.

² Freedom was the ‘governing principle’ (*hupothēsis*) of democracy (Arist. *Pol.* 6.1 (1317a40–41)), even the ‘purpose’ (*telos*) (Arist. *Rh.* 1.8 (1366a4)). See Dover (1974) 114–16.

³ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 2.2 (see also Rhodes (1981) *ad loc.*); Plut. *Sol.* 13–14; cf. Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.9.2. *Pelatai* later became a standard translation for Latin *cliens* (Hahn (1983)).

⁴ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 21.1–2; cf. *Pol.* 6.2 (1319b20–28); Finley (1983) 42–49.

⁵ Thuc. 2.37.2; cf. Dem. 18.205.

⁶ See Raaflaub (1983). Benjamin Constant’s classic speech in 1819 (for the text, see Constant (1988) 309–28) distinguished between ‘ancient’ liberty (positive liberties of participation) and ‘modern’ liberty (negative liberties of freedom from interference), but the distinction is merely schematic. Both types are to be found in Athens. See Thuc. 2.37.2; Arist. *Pol.* 5.7 (1310a31–33); Ober (2005) 92–127; Wallace (2006); Liddel (2007).

⁷ Saller (1982) 1; Millett (1989) 16.

goods and/or services. A one-sided system of exchange would be either exploitation or altruism, depending on the motivation of the giver. Secondly, patronage must be personal and lasting. Transactions mediated through markets or large organizations do not qualify, nor do temporary arrangements that do not entail the expectation of a long-term relationship continually renewed by further acts of gift and gratitude. Thirdly, the relationship between patron and client must be asymmetrical: the two parties are not of the same status and do not offer the same types of goods or services. A relationship that satisfies the first two criteria but fails on this last one would properly be termed ‘friendship’, in the sense of the almost formal reciprocal bond between friends.

In a seminal article on patronage in Athens, Millett added a fourth condition: that the party of superior status is in control of the relationship.⁸ This was the type of patronage, Millett argues, that Athenians deliberately avoided. This tweaking of Saller’s model suggests an important point the significance of which has not been fully realized: not all relationships of patronage are equal. Millett writes of Athenian ‘avoidance’ of patronage,⁹ while scholars since Millett have debated whether patronage existed in Athens as if the question admits of an either/or answer.¹⁰ Since many types of dependent relationships are possible, the question needs to be reworked.

To ask a question about ‘patronage’ is to view the issue from a top-down, broadly-conceived theoretical perspective. To understand Athenian political thought, we need to take an emic approach, to consider the perspective of the Athenian citizenry, which was concerned with present realities rather than complex, abstract models. Political reform flowed out of responses to the real, present needs of the people. Keeping this in mind, we will see that Athenians were not worried so much about controlling elite patrons as freeing the potential client. They talked about the dangers of slavery, not patronage. The perspective is consistently from the view of the average citizen.

Modern scholarship’s theoretical sophistication has taken the discussion about Athens off track, prompting inquiries into ancient attitudes toward modern constructs. The Athenians may well not have worried about systems of patron-client relationships at all. The absence of specific words for this social practice in ancient Greek does not prove the absence of the practice, but it does suggest an absence of theorizing about it.¹¹

Another problem with contemporary scholarship is its fixation on the economic dimension of patronage. Millett argues for a ‘revolution’ in 462 BC when the state obliterated patronage by providing financial support for poor citizens, while Thomas Gallant and Nicholas Jones argue that economic realities forced Athenians into dependence on elites regardless of their ideological scruples.¹² Inequality in wealth, however, was not the only threat to freedom. Inequality in political power was even more dangerous. This is a dimension of Athens’ limitations on patronage that has not been adequately considered. The first and most extensive attempts to secure the independence of the average citizen were in the realm of political practice, while financial programmes came later and only gradually. The revolution of 508/7 and the Cleisthenic reforms, which have been virtually ignored in discussions of patronage, were the decisive events that made emancipation of the lower classes possible.

The remainder of this article will pursue three theses: (1) Athenians cared more about securing the freedoms of individual citizens than abolishing patronage, (2) patronage (as we would call it) did exist in Athens but only in forms not threatening to civic freedoms and (3) in Athenian thinking

⁸ Millett (1989) 16.

⁹ Cf. Finley (1983) 39–47; Rhodes (1986).

¹⁰ Gallant (1991) 143–69; Mossé (1994–1995); Zelnick-Abramovitz (2000); Jones (2004) 78–85.

¹¹ Compare the Romans’ terms: *patronus*, *patrocinium*, *cliens*, *clientela*, etc. Patronage relationships in Greece were in all probability passed off under the guise of ‘friendship’ (*philia*), whose reciprocal and obligatory qualities made it a convenient vehicle. Millett

points out ‘the unabashed openness with which the Greeks accepted the utilitarian quality of much of their friendship’ ((1991) 120); cf. Dover (1974) 273–78; Konstan (1997).

¹² Millett (1989) 38–39; Gallant (1991) 143–69; Jones (2004) 78–85; cf. Johnson and Dandeker (1989) 219–20; Zelnick-Abramovitz (2000). On these relationships as results of the difficulty of subsistence in Mediterranean societies, see Garnsey and Woolf (1989) 154–58.

political freedom was prior to financial independence. The first section shows how the Athenian system's protection of individual citizens incidentally put broad restrictions on elite patronage. The second section argues that, despite these limitations, relationships of patronage persisted throughout the Classical period albeit in non-threatening forms. The third section argues that measures to ensure financial independence for the poor came only ad hoc and gradually. The fourth section explores the possibility of patronage systems in Greek *poleis* outside Athens.

I. Patronage checked: political freedoms in Athens

The historical process by which the Athenian citizen secured independence from the arbitrary whims of the elite began, as far as we can tell, with Solon. The Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution* makes this clear in its explanation for the rebellion that created the need for Solon's mediation: 'since the state was organized in this way and the many were enslaved to the few...'.¹³ The *pelatai* and *hektēmoroi*, apparently sharecroppers of some sort, were liable to be sold into slavery if they could not meet their obligations and so were 'trembling beneath their masters' in a 'humiliating slavery'.¹⁴ Solon's famous *seisachtheia* ('shaking off of burdens'), a one-time cancellation of all debts and future prohibition on enslaving a debtor for defaulting, was an important moment, marking the beginning of the Athenian people's struggle against the humiliation of dependence.¹⁵

In regard to patronage, the Solonian reforms are representative of the pattern that later democratic reforms would follow; the overall thrust was concerned more with the freedoms of the individual than with a complex system. Solon aimed to free enslaved debtors, not to break all relationships that were reciprocal, personal, asymmetrical and controlled by the more powerful party. Such relationships became problematic only when they infringed on the average citizen's freedom to participate in the *polis* as his own man. Nevertheless, the stand against the subjugation of poorer citizens eventually took the form of an entire political system designed to undercut the methods by which elite power politics typically operated and therefore to prevent less powerful citizens from being marginalized. This system, which evolved over the course of the fifth and fourth centuries, also had an incidental impact on patronage that was no less devastating for being unintended.¹⁶

Perhaps the most obvious means of coercion is the threat of force, but the Athenian prohibition on violence between citizens provided a public guarantee against bullying.¹⁷ Violence was always answerable through legal remedies, and there was in fact a direct connection between free status and protection of the body. It was the hallmark of slavery to be liable to be whipped or beaten for one's offenses or tortured for information.¹⁸ Slaves, not citizens, needed the protection of a patron and were beholden to their *kurioi* for their rights. The free man's person was protected by the democracy and did not require an elite sponsor.

Another type of coercive weapon at the rich's disposal is legal threat. In the late Roman Republic, for instance, the legal sphere was the province of the elite. A client would normally call on his patron to represent him in court, relying on the great man's superior status to win a favourable hearing from the judges.¹⁹ The Athenian legal system, on the other hand, was difficult for elites to manipulate

¹³ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 5.1: τοιαύτης δὲ τῆς τάξεως οὐσίας ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ, καὶ τῶν πολλῶν δουλευόντων τοῖς ὀλίγοις. Cf. 2.1–3.

¹⁴ Fr. 24.13–15 (Campbell): τοὺς δ' ἐνθάδ' αὐτοῦ δουλίην ἀεικέα / ἔχοντας, ἥθη δεσποτῶν τρομευμένους, / ἐλευθέρους ἔθηκα.

¹⁵ Raaflaub (2004) 45–57.

¹⁶ The following synchronic discussion is intended to explain Athenian political practice as a (relatively) coherent whole, not to give a description of Athens at a particular historical moment.

¹⁷ Josiah Ober (2012) argues that egalitarian societies tend to discourage violence because of the emphasis on civic dignity that the values of liberty and equality foster. Citizens have a vested self-interest in protecting the dignity of other citizens because a threat to one is a threat to all. On violence in Athens, see Alwine (2015) 117–52.

¹⁸ Dem. 22.55, 24.166.

¹⁹ Kennedy (1968); May (1988) 9–10; Deniaux (2006) 407.

because of its direct ties to popular ideology and the will of the people. Appeal to the jury courts was considered one of Solon's 'most democratic' reforms²⁰ because it discouraged arbitrators and administrators from rendering illegitimate verdicts.²¹ A man of means could perhaps bribe or coerce an arbitrator to favour him during the pre-trial proceedings, but this verdict was not final.

Once the case reached the law courts (*dikastēria*), the rhetorical training of a wealthy orator might give him an edge over his opponent, but there was another safeguard against elite manipulation – the suspicion of the jury itself. The jurors were wary of the rhetorical smoke-and-mirror tactics of deceptive speakers, especially when directed against private citizens.²² The system discouraged legal professionalism, which would have given the party with the most resources a significant advantage. Probably for this reason, the orators made frequent use of the *topos* of the speaker's inexperience, tapping into the jurors' worry that orators would attempt to manipulate men of lower status through the courts. The average Athenian was therefore fully capable of appearing before the jury himself and could even use his opponent's reputation against him.²³ This levelling of the playing field was something to be proud of. In his funeral oration, Pericles mentions equality 'in regard to private disputes' before equality in participating in the public sphere.²⁴

The participatory ethos of the democracy was also connected to the breaking of elite power blocs. For instance, the allocation of magistracies by lottery left minimal room for external influence. A few positions where specialist skill was required (for example the generalship) were the exception, but most posts were sortitive: jurors, Council members, archons and myriad other minor magistrates.²⁵ The randomness of the process meant that a small clique could not control who was assigned to what.²⁶ Though designed to ensure democratic participation, this practice also tended to stifle political patronage. Patrons extend their networks not only through threats but also through promises, especially promises of access to positions and persons of power. Elites intercede for their dependents to procure favours or secure positions, and men thus rewarded become part of the patron's network. Athens' constitutional arrangement was inimical to such practices, and the contrast with other city-states, especially oligarchic ones, was not lost on contemporaries.²⁷

Even if a powerful cabal had found a way to procure the selection of a handful of its candidates, the political gain would be insignificant due to the size of Athens' decision-making bodies and the frequent rotation of officers. The Council had 500 members with a term limit of one year. Many other bodies had a board of ten (usually one from each tribe).²⁸ These principles of collegiality and term limits were characteristic of democratic government²⁹ and are in striking contrast to patronage-based societies such as Rome, where the election of a particular consul or praetor could have a dramatic effect on the makeup of government. The problems created by the small number of offices on the *cursus honorum* were aggravated by the fact that a man of superior status could subordinate his colleague, as Julius Caesar did his co-consul, Bibulus, in 59 BC, which was facetiously referred to as the 'year of Julius and Caesar'. This kind of direct elite influence on the everyday workings of government was not possible in Athens. Thucydides famously referred to Pericles' leadership in the middle of the fifth century as 'the rule of the first man', but this was exaggeration. Pericles was voted down as general in 430 at the height of his power. Even Pericles' hold on power was tenuous.³⁰

²⁰ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 9.1; cf. Thuc. 2.37.1; Arist. *Pol.* 2.9 (1273b36–74a12).

²¹ A possible example of such collusion (between Demosthenes and Straton): Dem. 21.83–101. The secret ballot also helped quash the influence of patronage relationships (Aeschin. 3.233).

²² Isocr. 15.5; Hesk (2000).

²³ Hence the tactics employed in Lysias 24.

²⁴ Thuc. 2.37.1.

²⁵ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 43–69; Hansen (1991) 232–35.

²⁶ Similarly, Fergus Millar (1984) points to the lottery system of the Roman Republic as a disincentive to patronage.

²⁷ Eur. *Suppl.* 403–08; Thuc. 2.37.1.

²⁸ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 50–54; Hansen (1991) 237–39.

²⁹ Theophr. *Char.* 26.1–2. These practices probably account for the striking absence of accusations about malpractice or bribery in Athenian elections (Taylor (2007)).

³⁰ Thuc. 2.65.10: ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή. See Rhodes (2000).

Public pay for various civic duties contributed a further hedge against elite manipulation of politics, primarily by empowering the lower classes to participate.³¹ The debate about whether such pay constituted an ‘antidote’ to patronage by providing an alternative source of income misses the point;³² the political function of encouraging participation was its goal, not redistribution of wealth. Public pay was insufficient to serve as an alternative source of livelihood. The *misthoi* were not reliable: payments were not made to jurors or magistrates on a daily basis, but only on the days on which they had discharged their duties.³³ The *dikastikon* (jury pay), for instance, was disbursed only to those who had been selected in the yearly allotment to serve on the heliastic body and then had been selected, again by lot, to serve on one of the daily juries. The courts were in session not more than 240 days per year,³⁴ and, of course, a potential juror was always at risk of not being selected. If he did not make the initial selection for the heliastic body, he would lose the *dikastikon* for a full year. This would have been a very flimsy guarantee against economic hardship. There were similar problems with other *misthoi*. The Council met more often,³⁵ but the term lasted only a year, and citizens could only serve twice in their lifetimes (in the fifth century probably only once). Other magistracies also tended to have strict term limits. Assembly pay was introduced only after the Peloponnesian War and was available a mere 40 days per year. Such paltry sums could not provide an independent, state-provided source of income for the masses; redistribution of wealth must have been incidental to their main purpose, which was to keep the lower classes in control of political dialogue.³⁶

The features of Athens’ constitution that contemporaries saw as most characteristic of the democratic government were specifically intended to prevent manipulation of the system by the powerful and wealthy and hence to diffuse political power throughout the ranks of citizens. A stranglehold on power exercised by a small clique of elites would have been abhorrent. Such a de facto oligarchy would have threatened the three main tenets of the Athenian democracy – liberty, equality and security – and so steps were taken against it in nearly every area of *polis* institutions and practices.³⁷

II. Patronage persists: non-threatening hierarchical relationships

Terry Johnson and Chris Dandeker have pointed out that studies of patronage divide into two broad camps.³⁸ The first views patronage as a universal phenomenon, present in all societies. Humans naturally organize themselves into such relationships of dependence whether formally recognized or not. The second approach is to view patronage as a particular feature of certain cultures, a quasi-legal series of obligations between patrons and clients that permeates economic and political structures. This latter camp tends to view patronage as a system, a mechanism by which resources are distributed, while the former tends to view patronage in terms of individual relationships. Although like many dichotomies this one tends to oversimplify (the two views of patronage cannot in practice be neatly disentangled), this distinction is notwithstanding a helpful one.

The Athenian political system broke systems of patronage (Johnson and Dandeker’s second type), but individual hierarchical relationships persisted. Millett himself admits that such relationships continued under the democracy but argued that they were ‘peripheral’.³⁹ Millett’s critics have

³¹ Pericles probably refers to public pay when he asserts that poverty is not a bar to political participation (Thuc. 2.37.1). Aristotle (*Pol.* 4.5 (1293a5–7)) equates the availability of *misthos* with the participation of the poor. The level of pay in the fifth century (usually three obols per day) appears to have been effective (Markle (1985)), but it was probably viewed simply as compensation for time lost or the expense of travel.

³² Millett (1989) 37–47.

³³ Hansen (1979).

³⁴ Hansen (1991) 186.

³⁵ About 275 times per year (Hansen (1991) 251).

³⁶ Only the critics of democracy claimed that public service was welfare ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.13; Isocr. 7.54).

³⁷ On these three values of Athenian democracy, see Ober (1996); (2005) 92–127, along with Hansen (1996); Raaflaub (1996); Wood (1996); Liddel (2007).

³⁸ Johnson and Dandeker (1989) 219–20.

³⁹ Millett (1989) 36–37.

studiously uncovered additional evidence for hierarchical associations and argued that patronage was much more prevalent than Millett allows. The question that has frequently gone unasked, however, is what kinds of patronage were allowed to continue under the democratic regime. In fact, the defining characteristic of relationships of patronage at Athens was their weakness. They were not ‘peripheral’ in the sense of being rare and unimportant to social structure, but they were indeed peripheral to the day-to-day political operations of the *polis*. Patron-client relationships that posed no clear threat to political participation were simply ignored.

The Athenian source material points not to powerful ties of dependence but to temporary connections of expedience and mutual benefit. The ‘client’ was able to leave the relationship without serious consequences. The competition between Cimon and Pericles for the leadership of the people in the mid fifth century, which has very often been cited by scholars arguing both for and against patronage,⁴⁰ provides a vivid example of this weak variety of patronage that poses virtually no threat to the power of the people over the city’s affairs. Aristotle, Theopompus and Plutarch report that Cimon distributed his wealth to other members of his deme in order to enhance his own political clout and influence.⁴¹ Pericles, lacking the resources to compete with Cimon’s lavish outlay, resorted to implementing state pay for jurors, purchasing popularity with coin from public coffers.

By Millett’s interpretation, this event led to the disappearance of aristocratic patronage.⁴² Cimon was the typical aristocrat of the past, carefully cultivating his clientele. Pericles shattered this system by transferring the role of the patron from the wealthy individual to the state itself. Public pay served as an ‘antidote’ to patronage. This narrative is problematic, as Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz points out.⁴³ Pericles’ strategy was not significantly different in aim and method from Cimon’s. Both attempted to gain political influence by distributing handouts, whether from private resources or the public treasury. Zelnick-Abramovitz is right to draw attention to the similarity in Cimon’s and Pericles’ tactics, but the story illustrates not how strong Pericles’ state patronage was but how weak was Cimon’s. Cimon’s distributions of food and clothing to the members of his very small deme⁴⁴ served primarily to increase his reputation among the citizenry at large. Theopompus states explicitly that this was the result: ‘for all these reasons he became well reputed’.⁴⁵ In other words, he gained political clout. Aristotle mentions Cimon’s distributions in a clause parallel to his liturgies, implying the same impression of his aims. According to Gorgias, ‘Cimon acquired money so that he could spend it, and he spent it so that he would be honoured’.⁴⁶ There is no reason to believe that these families were ultimately beholden to Cimon for their subsistence or access to politics. Cimon’s ‘clients’ may have felt gratitude and supported him politically, but they were not at his beck and call. Rather, Cimon and Pericles were competing for leadership of the people⁴⁷ by increasing their reputation and influence through acts of munificence to the lower classes;⁴⁸ they were not bending individual citizens to their will.⁴⁹

⁴⁰ Finley (1983) 40–41; Whitehead (1986) 305–08; Millett (1989) 37–43; Mossé (1994–1995) 143; Dillon (1995) 32–34; Zelnick-Abramovitz (2000) 72; Jones (2004) 72–77.

⁴¹ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 27.3–4; *FGrH* 115 F89; Plut. *Cim.* 10.

⁴² Millett (1989) 37–43; cf. Finley (1983) 40–41.

⁴³ Zelnick-Abramovitz (2000).

⁴⁴ The bouleutic quota for the Lakiadai was only two (for the quotas, see Whitehead (1986) 369–73), which means they comprised less than 1% of the citizen body.

⁴⁵ *FGrH* 115 F89: ἐκ δὴ τούτων ἀπάντων ἠὺδοκίμει.

⁴⁶ Plut. *Cim.* 10.5: τὸν Κίμωνα τὰ χρήματα κτᾶσθαι μὲν ὡς χρῶτο, χρῆσθαι δὲ ὡς τιμῶτο.

⁴⁷ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 27.3: ἀντιδημαγωγῶν. Compare the fuzzy line between *ambitus* and patronage in Rome (Millar (1984) 11–12).

⁴⁸ Parading of one’s accomplishments was in the best tradition of the Athenian aristocracy (Osborne (2010a) 29–30). Such self-advertising allowed these elites to ask for the people’s gratitude (*charis*). See Davies (1981) 91–97; Johnson and Dandeker (1989) 93–108; Ober (1989) 231–33; Millett (1991) 123–26; Christ (2006) 181–83.

⁴⁹ Pericles’ success in countering Cimon’s strategy is further evidence that Cimon’s distributions did not create strong relationships of patronage. Sporadic public payments could not have supplanted personal ties of dependence.

Cimon and Pericles were playing the same game with different methods. The same might be said for other men of Attica who attained positions of influence in their demes. These rural politicians, known from deme decrees in their honour, have been identified as a possible patron class of Attica,⁵⁰ but honorary decrees do not attest personal relationships of dependence. Elites who use their wealth to benefit the local community (and not necessarily only their inferiors) and then receive formal acts of gratitude from that community's representative body are not engaged in any patronage worthy of the name. It is more likely that they, like Cimon, were using their wealth to increase their standing in the community.

Other evidence for personal relationships supports the same picture. In an anecdote from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Crito hires a 'watchdog' to prosecute the sycophants who have been attacking him in the courts. This lawyer on retainer, Archedemus, receives from Crito gifts and invitations to family sacrifices in return for his services as a rhetorical adept. This is certainly patronage, but the client is far from utterly dependent on the patron. Archedemus could do without Crito as easily as Crito could do without him.⁵¹

In the next episode of the *Memorabilia*, Socrates challenges a certain Diodorus to make a 'willing subordinate'⁵² of Hermogenes, presumably a man of moderate means, by befriending him and spending money on him. Diodorus complies, saying, 'Tell Hermogenes to call on me',⁵³ but Socrates advises him rather to go himself to call upon Hermogenes because 'you will benefit from this arrangement no less than he'.⁵⁴ Hermogenes would not be a true dependent as Diodorus perhaps had thought. Such relationships constituted no threat to anyone's political autonomy and so were unproblematic.

Zelnick-Abramovitz puts forth six additional examples of patronage, but these also are easily understood as weak, non-threatening forms. In two of the passages wealthy men adduce their occasional assistance for citizens in need as evidence for their virtuous character.⁵⁵ This is political posturing on the model of Cimon and Pericles. The remaining four relationships introduce another type of patronage: intra-elite. Men with political aspirations could attach themselves to respected politicians⁵⁶ or employ well-to-do benefactors to increase their standing and wealth.⁵⁷ They could also take a more mercenary route, serving as prosecutors-for-hire.⁵⁸ Conflicts between these networks sometimes led to situations in which the relationship of dependence had to be admitted openly. In the famous trial between Demosthenes and Aeschines in 330, it was common knowledge that Aeschines prosecuted Ctesiphon only to get at Demosthenes. This is presumably what enabled Demosthenes to deliver almost the entire defence speech, acting essentially as Ctesiphon's legal representative. In Roman fashion, the patron takes on his client's case.

⁵⁰ To be fair, Jones ((2004) 78) offers this suggestion hesitantly. On the interactions between politics at the deme and *polis* levels, see Osborne (1985) 64–92; Whitehead (1986) *passim*, especially 291–326.

⁵¹ Xen. *Mem.* 2.9. Two episodes earlier, Socrates describes Aristarchus, the *kurios* of the household, as the 'watchdog' (*kuōn*, 2.7.14) of the women under his authority. They produced clothing and food for Aristarchus, and he provided protection. In the Crito-Archedemus episode, it is Archedemus who plays the role of the watchdog (*kuna*, 2.9.7), and Crito the dependent, providing food and clothing. Cf. Bandini and Dorion (2011) 253.

⁵² Xen. *Mem.* 2.10.3: ὑπηρέτην ἐκόντα τε καὶ εὐνοῦν. The contrast is apparently with Diodorus' slaves, who are unwilling subordinates (2.10.2).

⁵³ Xen. *Mem.* 2.10.5: κέλευσον ἐλθεῖν ὡς ἐμὲ τὸν Ἑρμογένην.

⁵⁴ Xen. *Mem.* 2.10.5: οὐτ' ἐκεῖνῳ μείζον ἀγαθὸν τὸ πραχθῆναι ταῦτα ἢ σοί.

⁵⁵ Andoc. 1.147; Lys. 19.56–59.

⁵⁶ Lys. 28–29; Plut. *Phoc.* 6.1–7.2. Cf. the orators' cliques, including the relationships between Demosthenes and Timarchus or Ctesiphon and the group surrounding Eubulus (see Mossé (1994–1995) 147–50). In Rome the *patronus/clients* terminology was also used for relationships among the elite (Saller (1989) 52–60).

⁵⁷ [Dem.] 53.1–14, 59.72.

⁵⁸ Antiph. 6.34–36; Andoc. 1.118–23, 2.4; Lys. 7.39–40; Isae. 8.3; cf. Antiph. 5.33; Isocr. 16.7; Isae. 9.24; Dem. 18.249–51, 21.103–04, 24.14, 39.2; [Dem.] 53.14, 59.10; Aeschin. 2.154; Xen. *Mem.* 2.9.

Despite its obvious challenge to the Athenian ideal of the autonomous citizen, political patronage among the orators was not a serious danger to the democratic system. It is true that any form of dependence could entail social stigma: clients were deficient in independence and hence perhaps in manhood as well.⁵⁹ The orators often slander each other as ‘flatterers’ (*kolakes*), ‘hirelings’ (*misthōtoi*) or, euphemistically, ‘persuaded’.⁶⁰ The rhetoric notwithstanding, the ‘hirelings’ of whom we know were not dependent in the strictest sense. Their ties were based on political and personal opportunism. The ‘client’ entered a dependent relationship not out of desire for self-preservation but rather to play the high-level game of politics; he could abandon the relationship at any time.

Patronage did exist in Classical Athens but in a much weakened form. The public outlay of a Cimon and the clientele networks of a Demosthenes were tolerable because they did not threaten the fundamentals of the democratic system. As an example of a patronage system that would have been intolerable, consider Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ description of Rome’s early Republican period.⁶¹ Romulus reputedly divided the citizenry into two groups and reserved the important offices of state for the ‘better’ citizens. The lower classes had to rely on their patrician patrons even for the legal knowledge requisite for forming contracts and had to ask their patrons to bring suit on their behalf in disputes about such arrangements. The poor man who felt dissatisfied with his protector could probably do little other than switch patrons, which may well have been risky. In Dionysius’ conception, the elites were in firm control and held their many clients in subservience.⁶²

In Athens the poor could not be controlled in this way. Athens countenanced hierarchical relationships but not a system by which political access was brokered. Individual citizens were able to participate and feel secure in their persons without recourse to a local strongman. The ‘freedom’ rhetoric of ancient Athens appears to have been more than rhetoric.

III. Patronage undone: egalitarianism, empire and war

The Athenian *politeia* – the bundle of political and social practices that constituted Athenian public life – prevented wealthy landowners from controlling the political system, but we search in vain for a corresponding programme of economic relief.⁶³ However, once established through the political system, Athenian egalitarianism, the ideology that all citizens are equal, spilt over ad hoc into economic reforms. The growing prosperity of the Athenian Empire, combined with the democratic reforms implemented in the mid to late fifth century, had the effect of offering economic assistance to the poor, although this was a largely unforeseen and unintended consequence.⁶⁴

Two distinct shifts in the socio-economic realities at Athens can be traced during the course of the fifth century. The first change is what Ober calls the ‘epistemic shift’ that occurred during the revolution of 508/7.⁶⁵ Democratic thinking – the people’s ‘ability to *do* things’⁶⁶ – made the political empowerment of the lower classes possible. The second change was the rapid growth of the

⁵⁹ On the Greeks’ sensitivity about dependence, see Dover (1974) 40, 114, 240.

⁶⁰ For instance, Demosthenes’ long-winded attacks on Aeschines for being in Philip’s employ (for example Dem. 18.51–52). Archdemus (Xen. *Mem.* 2.9.8) is also accused of flattering. The *kolax* is a stock character of Aristophanic comedy; the term seems to have had a derogatory force similar to the Latin word *cliens*. See also Millett (1989) 30–33; Zelnick-Abramovitz (2000) 78–79; Brock (2013) 29.

⁶¹ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.9–11.

⁶² The historical accuracy of this *locus classicus* on Roman patronage (see Wallace-Hadrill (1989); Millar (1984)) is not important here.

⁶³ Solon’s *seisachtheia* was an emergency economic measure, but the prohibition of enslavement for debt actually gave citizens less economic security since they could not use their body as collateral.

⁶⁴ This thesis therefore runs counter to Burke’s argument that the Athenian lower classes possessed a ‘thetic ideology’, at the core of which was economic self-interest: Burke (1992); (2005); (2010). Burke’s claim that Athenians began to engage in rational economic planning during the fourth century (*cf.* Rhodes (2013)), a challenge to the substantivist approach to the ancient economy of Moses Finley (1973) and others (often mislabelled as ‘primitivist’ – see Morris (1994)), should not be extrapolated back to the fifth century.

⁶⁵ Ober (1998b).

⁶⁶ Ober (2007) 94.

Athenian Empire and standing military, which provided the immediate impetus for a varied assortment of economic policies. These two phases overlapped, but the political change was prior, both chronologically and causally, to the economic.⁶⁷

Naval service, perhaps the most important means for empowering the lower classes, was well-recognized as such in antiquity. After 480 BC,⁶⁸ virtually any able-bodied man could join the fleet as an oarsman and earn a healthy wage (at least half a drachma per day). This wage predates other forms of *misthoi* and was repeatable and consistently available.⁶⁹ The key moment was in 483/2 when Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to use their windfall from the silver mines at Laurium to build a fleet of 200 triremes.⁷⁰ Since each trireme required 170 rowers, such a fleet would have demanded approximately 34,000 rowers when deployed, in addition to marines and other personnel. Pericles is reported to have kept 60 triremes active each year, even during peacetime.⁷¹ More than 50 years later (in 428), at least 150 ships were in commission at the same time, requiring 25,500 oarsmen.⁷² Even after the disastrous Sicilian Expedition, in 406, the Athenians manned 110 ships employing 18,700. These figures account only for warships; employment would also have been available on freights, transports and commercial shipping. Thus, Athens' thalassocracy provided an economic safety net by offering massive opportunities for employment.⁷³

As with so many other aspects of the ancient economy, the precise pay of the average oarsman and the purchasing power of that pay remain unclear, but the sources nevertheless indicate that it was a viable way to sustain a family. In the fifth century, rowers received at least three obols and possibly even a drachma per day, but Vincent Gabrielsen points out that this accounts only for the money dispensed from state treasuries; rowers could also depend on additional provisioning and pay from private citizens, namely, the wealthy trierarchs who were appointed to outfit the ships.⁷⁴ That sailors acquired enough money to support their families is implied by an incidental remark by the speaker of *Against Polycles* that many refuse to re-embark on their ships once they have put in at Piraeus 'unless each man gets some money to put his household affairs in order'.⁷⁵ The setting for this statement is the middle of the fourth century, when naval service would have been if anything less lucrative than during the fifth. The sources assume that serving as an oarsman was an effective way not only to receive food and shelter for oneself while on duty but also to improve the position of one's *oikos*.

⁶⁷ Although in accord with Ober's (2007) argument for the priority of epistemic change over the military revolution, this argument holds that militarism and the Empire created deeper changes in the economic structure of Athens that secured individual freedom in new and radical ways. This study also helps address the question of how militarism affected democratization without resorting to the military determinism argument inherited from the Greeks themselves (Pritchard (2010) 56–59) and avoids the problematic idea of a necessary link between naval power and democracy (Robinson (2011) 230–37).

⁶⁸ The year 480 is the *terminus ante quem*: Plut. *Them.* 7.5, 10.4; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23.1. Hans van Wees suggests military pay goes back to Cleisthenes' *naukrariai* reforms ((2013) 71), but this is based on analogy with the practice of *misthos* in Eretria in 506, which in turn is based on a rather tenuous interpretation of the ambiguous language of an inscription ((2013) 27).

⁶⁹ Van Wees' ((1995) 159–62) argument that the fleet was staffed by a majority of non-citizens is unconvincing. Even if this were true, however, it would support the argument that any citizen could serve if he wished. Cf. Raaflaub (2007) 117–19.

⁷⁰ Hdt. 7.144; Thuc. 1.14. A publicly-financed fleet of triremes may have existed by the end of the sixth century (van Wees (2013) 64–68; but cf. Pritchard (2010) 9–10), but the scale of the Themistoclean programme and the size of the fleet that fought at Salamis were unprecedented.

⁷¹ Plut. *Per.* 11.4, cf. 12.5. Aristotle refers to 20 'guard ships' (*Ath. Pol.* 24.3), presumably in constant service.

⁷² The total number of triremes that Athens possessed at this time was about 300. The Old Oligarch (3.4) reports 400, but this seems an exaggeration or perhaps a textual corruption. Cf. Ar. *Ach.* 545; Thuc. 2.13.8; Andoc. 3.9.

⁷³ Gabrielsen (1994) 105–14.

⁷⁴ *FGrH* 392 F13 = Plut. *Cim.* 9.4; Gabrielsen (1994) 110–14; van Wees (2013) 70–71. On the rate of pay, see van Wees (2013) 74–75.

⁷⁵ [Dem.] 50.11: ἐὰν μὴ τις αὐτοῖς ἕτερον ἀργύριον δίδῃ ὥστε τὰ οἰκεῖα διοικήσασθαι. Cf. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.13; Thuc. 6.24.3; Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.4; Dem. 3.34, 14.28–29; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 24.1. For statistical confirmation, see Ober (2010) 262–65.

Sometime around the middle of the fifth century, the Athenians began paying for infantry service as well. Aristotle claims that a standing force of more than 3,000 received pay,⁷⁶ and the number would have been much greater during Athens' frequent wars. Athenian citizens were the main fighting force throughout the fifth and fourth centuries,⁷⁷ and benefitted directly.

The various colonial ventures of the fifth century provided opportunities even for those who did not serve in the military. Many families received 'allotments' (*klēroi*) of land parcelled out from the hinterland of occupied territories. That these settlements acted as a pressure valve for disgruntled Athenians is stated explicitly by Plutarch and is confirmed by a decree that restricts settlers at a colony at Brea to the two lowest property classes: *thētes* and *zeugitai*.⁷⁸ The heyday of this process was during the ascendancy of the Delian League.⁷⁹ At least 4,000 Athenians received foreign land allotments between 450 and 440 alone,⁸⁰ and perhaps as many as 10,000.⁸¹

Building programmes provided yet another means of wage-earning for the poor. The public naval dockyards in the Piraeus likely created a huge industrial district. The ship sheds were constructed at public expense, and both they and the triremes required constant maintenance.⁸² The religious and civic buildings that began to rise under Cimon and then multiplied under Pericles also ensured for common labourers a share in the wealth of empire.⁸³ The impact on the economy cannot be precisely calculated, but Edmund Burke has provided a reasonable estimate that between 1,500 and 2,000 workers were employed annually at the peak of the Periclean programme (between 450 and 430 BC).⁸⁴ The rate of pay seems to have been commensurate with the average wage for unskilled work.⁸⁵

Within this context public pay should be considered in its economic capacity. Though insufficient in themselves to supplant relationships of dependence, the various *misthoi* were part of the overall trend toward economic redistribution. In the political sphere, pay was extended to members of the Council, various other magistrates, jurors, prison wardens and, after 403, those who attended the Assembly.⁸⁶ A welfare system of sorts covered invalids (*adunatoi*) and the orphans of men who died in the armed forces.⁸⁷ By the end of the century, a 'two-obol dole' (*diōbelia*) was granted for the first time, perhaps to the indigent.⁸⁸ Public pay contributed to the variety of ways in which wealth was finding its way into the pockets of the lower classes.

Another development connected with this trend toward economic fairness is the regulation of the grain supply. The *sitophylakes*, 'grain-guardians', were charged with preventing inflation and profiteering by fixing a reasonable price for unground grain, barley-meal and wheat loaves.⁸⁹ The guarantee of a predictable price for staple crops preserved the purchasing power of wages. By the fourth century, the supply of grain was a regular item of discussion at the Assembly, which passed a series of regulations.⁹⁰ These are further examples of policies inspired by practical concerns that ended up adding financial securities for the average Athenian.⁹¹

⁷⁶ 1,600 archers, 1,200 cavalry, 500 guards at the dockyards, 50 guards at the Acropolis (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 24.3).

⁷⁷ Pritchard (2010) 51–55.

⁷⁸ ML 49 = *IG* I³ 46 (Fornara 100).

⁷⁹ For the extensive evidence for colonial ventures, see Dillon and Garland (1994) 234, 236–38, 244.

⁸⁰ Meiggs (1975) 260.

⁸¹ Finley (1978) 115.

⁸² Jordan (1975) 21–61; van Wees (2013) 13.

⁸³ Plut. *Per.* 12.5.

⁸⁴ Burke (2005) 11.

⁸⁵ The accounts of the Erechtheum indicate that one drachma (= six obols) per day was the average wage (*IG* I² 373–74).

⁸⁶ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 24.3, 62.2–3. Mogens Hansen (1979) suggests that pay for magistrates was discontinued in the fourth century, but see the counter arguments by Gabrielsen (1981) and Pritchard (2014).

⁸⁷ [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 3.4; Aeschin. 1.158; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 24.3 (orphans), 49.4 (*adunatoi*).

⁸⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.2; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 28.3; ML 84 = *IG* I³ 375; Buchanan (1962) 35–48; Rhodes (1981) 355–56; Burke (2005) 28.

⁸⁹ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 51.3.

⁹⁰ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 43.4, 51.3–4. On the *sitopōlai* and *sitōnai*, see Möller (2007) 363, 380–83.

⁹¹ The city made a public disbursement of grain to the citizens on one occasion before the Peloponnesian War (*FGrH* 328 F119; Plut. *Per.* 37.3), but this was an

The starting points of the various programmes discussed above were scattered over the course of a century and were not part of a systematic programme of economic relief.⁹² The motivations lay elsewhere. Military pay and cleruchies were directly connected to Athenian militarism and foreign policy. The massive Athenian fleet owed its existence to a decision to seek military power at the expense of individual economic advantage: in 483/2 Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to use their unexpected surplus from the mines to build triremes instead of providing handouts to private citizens. Athenians were willing to invest in military enterprises for their own sake, as is made clear by the increase in cavalry pay, *ca.* 445–438, when the number of daily allotments for the upkeep of a horse was more than tripled. The public money allocated to members of the wealthy class of horse owners had little value as redistribution of wealth.⁹³ The building programmes and public pay were intended to beautify the city and increase participation in politics. Payments to the orphans of the war dead and invalids were closer to a genuine welfare system, but their application was extremely limited. Restrictions on the grain trade ensured reasonable prices but not free meals.

Because these economic opportunities were implemented piecemeal and were not part of an overall plan, scepticism about Plutarch's thesis that Pericles was solely responsible for instituting a concerted programme of economic relief is warranted.⁹⁴ Several reasons can be posited to explain why Plutarch misrepresents the historical process in this case. First, ancient biography's focus on aristocratic personalities led to a view of history that exaggerated the role of the individual and marginalized broader social forces. Second, one of the overarching theses of the *Life*, Pericles' ability to tame the mob, would tend to diminish the role of the masses. Third, hindsight easily ascribes intentionality to a series of events that arose from deeper ideological forces. One need only mention the laws of Solon, the constitution of Lycurgus or the urban planning of Theseus.

The contemporary witness of the Old Oligarch is to be preferred despite his open hostility to democracy. This disgruntled grandee complains that the people quite deliberately listen to the advice of 'the worst' because these demagogues propose measures favourable to 'the base' elements of the state.⁹⁵ In other words, there was no 'rule of the first man'; orators merely provided direction for policies amenable to mass ideology. If one orator failed to shape his proposals to give expression to the will of the people, someone else would. This is what raised the Old Oligarch's ire.⁹⁶

The Athenian aristocracy, long accustomed to strife within its ranks, seems to have lacked a class cohesiveness that would have made effective resistance possible. Even the Old Oligarch admits that some elites had, much to his chagrin, sided with the people.⁹⁷ By this time, systematic cultivation of the *dēmos* was becoming a standard (and increasingly necessary) tactic for the

exceptional measure as the result of a windfall (*cf.* Hdt. 3.57, 7.144). Religious festivals provided additional opportunities for free meals since the sacrificial meat was distributed to all. Athenians were notorious for having more festivals than any other *polis* (Thuc. 2.38; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.9). For an estimate of the costs, see Pritchard (2012) 23–39.

⁹² The term 'state patronage' is therefore misleading. In any case, Athenians did not envision a distinction between the people and the 'government' (as have most political theorists after Hobbes), and so these economic programmes would not have created a sense of reciprocal obligation to a 'patron'. Public programmes were seen as part of the overall *politeia* and made Athenians better 'lovers of the *polis*' (Thuc. 2.43.1) without putting them in the debt of an abstract personified entity that was distinguishable from the *polis* itself. On the terminology

used for the relationships between *polis* and individual, see Brock (2013) 25–42.

⁹³ Regular subsidies (*sitos* – four obols per diem) were only one element of the programme. The cavalry received extra pay while on campaign (*misthos*) and state loans (*katastasis*) were available for purchasing a horse (Spence (2010)).

⁹⁴ Plut. *Per.* 11–14.

⁹⁵ [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.4–9. *Cf.* Plato's *Gorgias* (especially 463a–c), in which Socrates criticizes rhetoric as 'flattery' because it seeks the will of the audience; also Dem. 3.13.

⁹⁶ Ober (1998a) 20–23. See Kurt Raaflaub's careful handling of the interaction of public demand and creative leadership ((2007) 136–8).

⁹⁷ [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.20. This was an old tradition: see Herodotus' (5.66.2) depiction of Cleisthenes.

political elite.⁹⁸ As long as political protections allowed the lower classes to vote their opinions freely and politicians were willing to propose popular measures to gain prestige, the aristocrats could do little about it. Opposition would have been especially difficult in view of the ad hoc nature of these reforms; the lack of a planned and articulated programme made the process difficult for contemporaries to understand, much less resist. In any case, the reign of the *dēmos* was relatively mild. The Athenians never demanded wholesale land redistribution (common elsewhere) and they continued to afford elite citizens ample opportunity to display their personal *aretē*.⁹⁹ Class tension did not reach a breaking point until the end of the Peloponnesian War, during which the financial strain grew as the navy was more active, cleruchs were regularly needed, the building programme continued apace and public pay was expanded.¹⁰⁰ The tax burden on the wealthy was increasingly onerous,¹⁰¹ and dissatisfaction with the democratic regime led resentful elites to attempt a short-lived oligarchic coup in 411 and then to collaborate with a Spartan-imposed junta in 404.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, when democracy was restored in 403, the Athenians went right back to their old habits. Under collaborating elite leadership,¹⁰³ the various programmes that kept the individual Athenian free continued to make gains.¹⁰⁴ If the economic realities of the fourth century had forced the lower classes back into the clutches of rich patrons, Isocrates' jeremiad about the contemporary constitution would be inconceivable.¹⁰⁵ In the 'good old days', the poor respected their betters and willingly submitted to them. In the fourth century this was apparently not the case. Demosthenes asserted that Athenians were free to go about their business without worrying whom they might meet because they 'trusted the *politeia*'.¹⁰⁶ Such freedom and security for the individual citizen continued to be deadly to patronage.

Despite the absence of planning, these practices added up to a series of economic opportunities that effectively smothered patronage networks.¹⁰⁷ Democracy was the catalyst for this process; the Athenian Empire and widespread mobilization for war were accelerants. It was possible to have a large navy (like Corinth) or land army (like Sparta) or empire (like Macedon) without democracy, but when combined with democracy they reinforced it. The Athenians' deepest motivation for foreign policy may have been sheer militarism – 'the will to power'¹⁰⁸ – but the habits of a free, democratic citizenry ensured that the many reaped the benefits, and patronage dwindled.

⁹⁸ Connor (1971).

⁹⁹ Whitehead (1983); Ober (1989) 197–98. The relatively low level of disparity between large and small estates in Attica may have been a factor (Burford (1993); Morris (1994) 362–64; Hanson (1995); Ober (2010) 259; cf. Jones (2004) 70–71).

¹⁰⁰ Rosivach (2011).

¹⁰¹ Christ (2006) 161–64. Although Athens spent huge sums on civic events, expenditure on war exceeded anything else (Pritchard (2012)). The impetus behind the increased taxes on the rich may be at least partially explained by the thesis of Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage (2012) that war creates a social consensus that can contribute to democratization by forcing a more equitable sharing of burdens.

¹⁰² These events were the real beginning of Athens' fear of oligarchs. Previously, tyranny, not oligarchy, was seen as the chief threat to democracy (Osborne (2010b)).

¹⁰³ The Athenian system continued to exploit divisions and feuds within the aristocracy (Aeschin. 1.2).

¹⁰⁴ The navy was rebuilt, public pay programmes were reinstated and expanded, building programmes

continued and shipbuilding continued (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.3). By the 350s 300 ships were available (Dem. 14.13), and by the 330s we find the Athenians manning the largest fleet in their history (Burke (1985) 256–58). Military pay for both navy and infantry continued (Dem. 4.28–29; [Dem.] 50.11). Another new programme was the theoric distributions (on which, see Buchanan (1962); Rhodes (2013) 219–30). The expense of state subsidization may even have been a decisive factor pushing the Athenians into further imperial endeavours and ultimately toward Lycurgus' financial development plan (Xen. *Vect.* 1.1, cf. 4.33, 6.1; Burke (2005) 35–36; (2010) 46–49).

¹⁰⁵ Isocr. 7.31–35.

¹⁰⁶ Dem. 21.221.

¹⁰⁷ They also changed social dynamics in favour of the poor since the 'threat advantage' of the patron decreases as his clients' opportunities for help elsewhere increase.

¹⁰⁸ Vidal-Naquet (1977) 127; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.8. See also Pritchard (2010) (along with the other articles in the volume). Cf. Kallet (2013).

IV. Patronage in other *poleis*

The Athenocentricity of the extant evidence often forces our view of ancient Greece to be filtered through an Athenian lens. In the present case, Athens may serve as a template to evaluate the more fragmentary evidence for other societies. The foregoing sections point to five areas in which Athenian political practice ran counter to elite dominance of the lower classes: (1) guarantees against physical intimidation and (2) legal threat, (3) a political system designed to make manipulation by individuals impossible, (4) public pay for political participation and (5) various measures of economic redistribution. Overall, Greek *poleis* were fertile ground for patronage relationships,¹⁰⁹ so it is likely that cities lacking specific limitations on patronage allowed it to flourish. Since economic prosperity will not in itself put a stop to patronage (it suffices to mention Rome), a political system that prevents the domination of the lower classes is a *sine qua non*.¹¹⁰

The evidence suggests that such patronage-limiting practices were typical of democratic regimes but unusual for oligarchies. It is not surprising that elite-dominated regimes would have allowed patronage to flourish. Sparta, the best-documented oligarchy in Classical Greece, provides a clear contrast with Athens. Far from prohibiting violence, the Spartan regime encouraged casual fighting.¹¹¹ Typically of oligarchies, lawsuits at Sparta were decided by a handful of magistrates rather than large courts and so were susceptible to manipulation by the elite.¹¹² The political system in general was closer to Rome than Athens, being dominated by the wealthy few whose friendships and enmities had disproportionate influence on policy,¹¹³ while public pay for political office was anathema.¹¹⁴ The domination of a small Council over the Assembly¹¹⁵ (another oligarchic characteristic) prevented popular ideological control over policy. There is evidence for a patronage system at Sparta,¹¹⁶ and we should expect that other similar regimes (that is, oligarchies) would also have countenanced patronage systems.¹¹⁷

Democracies were a different matter. The evidence¹¹⁸ suggests that the patronage-limiting practices discussed above were common features of democracies. Specific political practices (such as guarantees against physical violence and legal manipulation by elites) are not well attested because of the nature of the evidence, but the political institutions of Athens were common throughout the

¹⁰⁹ Johnson and Dandeker (1989) 219–20. Gallant ((1991) 143–69) argues that the four criteria necessary for a system of patronage ((1) a weak central authority, (2) different levels of access to vital resources, (3) which was based on one's status, and (4) an ideational system emphasizing equality and reciprocity) applied to Athens, but the same could be said for virtually any Greek state. Cf. Arnaoutoglou (1994).

¹¹⁰ On the wealth of ancient Greece, see Ober (2010); (2015). If correct, Ober's thesis would effectively disprove the economic hardship theory proposed by Gallant ((1991) 143–69) and Jones ((2004) 78–85). There is a growing body of literature suggesting a connection between economic prosperity and democracy (for example Ober (2010); Fleck and Hanssen (2013))

¹¹¹ Xen. *Lac.* 4.5–6; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 5.464e.

¹¹² Arist. *Pol.* 3.1 (1275b8–11). For example, the case of Sphodrias (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.24–33). On aristocratic juries, see Arist. *Pol.* 2.8 (1267b37–68a5), 2.11 (1273a13–20), 4.9 (1294a36–39), 4.16 (1301a10–15).

¹¹³ In the *Hellenica*, Xenophon describes the political scene in Sparta primarily with reference to the friendships and enmities of Lysander and Agesilaus. Cf. Thuc. 4.108.7; Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.32; Plut. *Lys.* 19.1. See also Cartledge (1987) 139–59.

¹¹⁴ On public *misthos* connected with radical democracy, see Arist. *Pol.* 6.5 (1320a22–b4); cf. Thuc. 8.97.1. Like other oligarchies, Spartan citizenship was restricted by a property requirement (Arist. *Pol.* 2.9 (1271a26–37)). This meant that the disfranchised would have had to rely on the citizen class as brokers in order to gain access to power (as an example, see Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.34). In this sort of environment patronage thrives.

¹¹⁵ Plut. *Lyc.* 26. Members of the Gerousia did not even undergo scrutiny (Arist. *Pol.* 2.9 (1271a5–8)).

¹¹⁶ Hodkinson (2009) chapter 11.

¹¹⁷ Millett ((1989) 19–25) is probably correct that Athens itself was a patronage society before the institution of democracy. Furthermore, Plutarch's *Lives* contain a few hints that legal patronage may have been standard in Athens in the early fifth century (Plut. *Them.* 5.4, *Arist.* 7.1). Without corroborating evidence, these passages from Plutarch, a late and not always reliable source, should not be pushed too far, but they may indicate that patronage only gradually lost its hold as economic reforms took force.

¹¹⁸ Eric Robinson (2011) has collated the available data for 54 democratic *poleis*, which substantially confirm Aristotle's statements about democracy in the *Politics* (see below).

Greek world: people's courts,¹¹⁹ impersonal bureaucracies,¹²⁰ public pay¹²¹ and popular ideological control through the Assembly.¹²² The democratic commitment to an ideology of freedom and equality is attested in other *poleis* as well.¹²³ The political foundations for ensuring the freedom of the individual citizen and therefore breaking patronage relationships were a common feature of democratic constitutions.¹²⁴ It is likely that the rise of democracy occasioned the demise of many patronage systems, and so patronage was probably on the decline throughout the Greek world during the fifth and fourth centuries as democratic regimes became more prevalent.

V. Conclusion

The starting point for the debate about patronage in Athens is the democracy's ideological commitment to the freedom and equality of each citizen. Political practices that limited patronage flowed out of concern for the people's welfare, not fear about an abstractly conceived system. For this reason 'avoidance', which implies deliberate intent, is the wrong word to describe Athenian policies. Once the lower classes had been strengthened and the threat of elite domination removed, Athenians blithely allowed emasculated forms of patronage to limp along for more than half a century.

The Empire delivered the death blow. Political freedoms had made elite coercion of the lower classes difficult, but the addition of economic freedoms made it all but impossible. As the imperial power of Athens grew, the political dominance of the *dēmos* created an informal system of redistribution of wealth. The final remaining method of coercion, appeal to a client's poverty, was removed. However, economic freedoms for the poor were the eventual result, not the primary intent, of these practices.

The gradual shift toward a radical combination of political and economic freedoms demonstrates how an ideology can have consequences unforeseen by those who first sponsored it. Solon and Cleisthenes may never have envisioned the economic policies made possible by the Athenian Empire, but the egalitarian habits that they had fostered paved the way. Once wealth started pouring into the city, the political structure of the democracy decisively influenced whether the funds flowed. They often found their way, admittedly ad hoc, to those who needed them most. In this sense, the growing financial independence of the average citizen in Athens was accidental only insofar as it was unforeseen. The programmes of the Periclean era were in many ways the logical conclusion of the political reforms brought about decades earlier. The undermining of existing hierarchies followed naturally.

This development in many ways parallels the advance of egalitarianism in early American history. For many 18th-century thinkers, 'democracy' was a pariah word, implying a type of mob rule that was to be shunned. Yet less than half a century after the framing of the constitution, Americans began thinking of their government as a 'democracy'.¹²⁵ The similarity to the Athenian case

¹¹⁹ Argos, Phlius, Syracuse, Corcyra, Cos, Cyme, Heraclea Pontica and Rhodes (Robinson (2011) 18, 48–49, 81–82, 123, 154, 157, 159, 170, 225–26). Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 9.1; *Pol.* 3.1 (1275a22–33, b5–6), 6.2 (1317b25–7)) also assumes popular courts to be characteristic of democracy.

¹²⁰ Term limits and large bodies for magistrates were common features of democracies (*Arist. Pol.* 5.8 (1308a13–16), 6.2 (1317b20–25, 41–1318a3); Robinson (2011) 242–44), as was the principle of collegiality (*Theophr. Char.* 26.1–2). There is evidence for selection by lot at Syracuse, Croton and Eretria (Robinson (2011) 67, 110, 174, 227).

¹²¹ There is evidence for *misthos* at Iasus and Rhodes (Robinson (2011) 160, 169, 227; de Ste. Croix (1975)), and possibly Camarina (Robinson (2011) 97–100). See also *Arist. Pol.* 2.12 (1274a8–11), 6.2 (1317b35–8), 6.5 (1320a22–b4).

¹²² There was a dominating *dēmos* at Argos, Corinth, Elis, Mantinea, Arcadia, Phlius, Thebes, Syracuse, Iasus, Plataea and Messana (Robinson (2011) 224–25).

¹²³ Robinson (2011) 228.

¹²⁴ The connection between democracy and militarism is well known (Keane (2010)), but it is not clear how warlike democracies other than Athens were (Keane (2010) 384–88).

¹²⁵ Roberts (1994); Dunn (2005); Wilentz (2007).

is intriguing. The United States' expansion brought with it an increase in economic opportunities for the poor through the frontier, a cleruchy system of which the Athenians could only have dreamed. The economic independence of the lower classes, an accident of empire, combined with the formal political freedoms granted in political documents accelerated democratic reform.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau warned that two types of inequality could threaten the stability of a state.¹²⁶ Inequalities in power would lead to violence and coercion of the weak, while inequalities in wealth would allow one citizen to buy another. This sentiment, focused on political and economic realities affecting the individual citizen rather than broad theories about systems of power, is very close to that of the Athenians. Rousseau also stated that the impossibility of attaining the ideal of equality was no reason not to seek it as far as was possible.¹²⁷ This is another sentiment with which the Athenians would undoubtedly have agreed.

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¹²⁶ *Social Contract* 2.11.

¹²⁷ *Social Contract* 1.6.

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