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Political Polupragmones: Busybody Athenians, Meddlesome Citizenship, and Epistemic Democracy in Classical Athens

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Political Polupragmones:
Busybody Athenians, Meddlesome Citizenship, and Epistemic Democracy in Classical
Athens

An Honors Paper for the Department of Classics

By Harry David Rube

Bowdoin College, 2016

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Introduction

My semester spent studying history and archaeology in Athens, Greece in the spring of 2015 was the first time that I, a Classical Studies and Government double major focusing largely on Roman politics, had been brought into sustained contact with the institutions, ideology, and political topography of Athenian democracy. Athens immediately struck me, as it has many others, as politically exceptional in contrast to much of the ancient and modern world. While far from the only democracy in the competitive world of Greek city-states, or *poleis*, during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.,¹ Athens is notable in comparison to its contemporaries for the breadth of its franchise, strength of popular ideology and participatory political institutions that encouraged direct mass participation by a diverse citizenry.²

The Athenian democracy is traditionally described as having been founded in 508/507 B.C. in part due to the reforms of the politician Cleisthenes, who instituted a series of complex institutional reforms that ended civil conflict created in the wake of the overthrow of aristocratic Peisistratid tyrants.³ While politics at the start of the fifth century was still dominated by aristocratic families ruling through claims of wealth, birth ties, and social status,⁴ having divided the Athenians into 139 demes, or townships, Cleisthenes expanded the power of the masses by making citizenship for every individual dependent on the vote of one's fellow demesmen. In this way, he made the basic grant of political

¹ Robinson (2011): 248 offers a list of other *poleis* in Classical Greece and Ionia that were democratic during the classical period, from the early fifth to late fourth century B.C.

² Ober (2008): 75.

³ Ober (1989): 74; *Ath. Pol.* 22.

⁴ Ober (1989): 70.

rights dependent on community vote of elite *and* non-elite neighbors rather than aristocratic privilege, and based on political equality and consensus rather than deference.⁵ The creation of a Council of 500 that had representation from every deme—initially elected, and later chosen by lot—was a crucial institution that eventually allowed non-elite Athenians to participate in the yearlong part-time process of managing some of the most important affairs of the state. The creation of ostracism—the ability for the whole populace to exile a figure deemed dangerous to the state—and the participation of the lower classes on juries heightened the power of non-elites and the citizen body as a whole vis-à-vis the governing elite.⁶

Over time, the institutions of political consensus put in place by Cleisthenes developed into full-fledged popular government. Property requirements were lowered and yearlong term limits were introduced for magistracies. Eventually magistrates were selected by lot rather than election, in order to ensure that power was not monopolized and the experience of administration was distributed amongst the citizen body.⁷ The popular assembly—open to all citizens—became the primary body where political decisions were made, and the prominence of the navy, Athens’ development of overseas empire, and development as a commercial center contributed to the political self-awareness and growing strength of the landless class of *thetes*, who worked as sailors on Athenian triremes, as well as lived and worked as banausic wage laborers, artisans, and craftspeople

⁵ Ober (1989): 71.

⁶ Hansen (1999): 35.

⁷ Hansen (1999): 52.

in the urban city center.⁸ By the end of the fifth century, following Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War, civil strife, and the experience of two unsuccessful oligarchic coups, the democracy stabilized until conquered by the Macedonians in the 320s B.C. In the fourth century, the poorest Athenian citizens were subsidized for lost wages for attendance on the assembly and juries.⁹ Most property requirements for magistracies were non-existent or ignored, functionally allowing Athenians of all classes to be eligible for the lottery-chosen administrative collegial boards and magistracies.¹⁰ The failed oligarchies notwithstanding, mass participation by non-elites was widespread and embedded in Athens' political culture in the fourth century B.C.¹¹

For modern scholars, the Athenian experience raises important questions about representation (or the lack thereof), political expertise, and civic culture, which can inform debate and scholarship surrounding the modern phenomenon of representative liberal democracy. Modern American democratic academics treat the question of voter turnout and citizen participation in civic institutions as a problem to be solved.¹² In the early twenty-first century, scholars have sounded increasingly dire notes about the state of civic participation in politics, with some noting steep declines over the last forty years not only in voting rates—the easiest and most common act of political participation—but also declines in interest in public affairs, current events, attendance at local government

⁸ Burke (2005): 8.

⁹ For institution of assembly pay, see *Ath. Pol.* 41.3 ; for jury pay in the fourth century, see *Ath. Pol.* 62.2; for pay as allowing the poor to participate in public service see Markle (1985): 271.

¹⁰ Hansen (1999): 227.

¹¹ Harris (2014): 4.

¹² Saunders (2012): 306.

meetings, and participation in political campaigns.¹³ Due to popular and controversial works like Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, the topic of political action, individual engagement, and civic participation has focused on the role, connections, and activity of the individual citizen. The trope of the active citizen—someone involved in many political and civic associations at a higher level than the norm—has become a common one in social science and the rhetoric of contemporary political discourse.

For that reason, coming across the terms πολυπράγμων and ἀπράγμων in Athenian literature of the democratic period can be surprising. In contrast to the modern concern of citizens not doing enough, the πολυπράγμων could be described as the citizen who does too much, deriving from the words πολύ (many) and πράγματα (things, deeds, affairs, or business). On the other hand, the ἀπράγμων is the opposite—they could broadly be described as someone who refrains from being involved in πράγματα. These terms were actively employed in literature and political rhetoric during the fifth and fourth century in Athens to describe certain attitudes towards citizenship just as terms such as active, involved, apathetic, and disengaged are used in the modern day. My interest in making the characteristics of being a πολυπράγμων, known as πολυπραγμοσύνη, the focus of this project comes from my initial confusion as to how the figure of the overactive citizen was treated in contemporary Athenian discourse. Whereas our modern political context seems to popularly extol the virtues of the citizen who is politically and socially active above and

¹³ Putnam (2000): 46 offers broad (and negative) overview of declines in all these trends. See Skocpol and Fiorina (1999): 2-20 for an overview of similar trends and a broader perspective of scholarship in the field.

beyond their peers, in literature discussing and produced by the city of Athens—a vibrant participatory democracy—the view is decidedly mixed.

In Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the politician Pericles, in his famous praise of Athenian democracy, claims that in Athens:

“ἔνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια, καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἔνδεῶς γινῶναι: μόνοι γὰρ τὸν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν...”

“You will find united in the same persons an interest at once in private and in public affairs, and in others of us who give attention chiefly to business, you will find no lack of insight into political matters. For we alone regard the man who takes no part in public affairs not as one who minds his own business, but as good for nothing”¹⁴

(Thuc. 2.40, trans. Smith)

Upon first glance, one might expect such language to be abundant in the literature and rhetoric of a participatory political culture. However, in reviewing this quotation, the classicist A.W. Gomme claimed that in fact, Pericles' criticism of the ἀπράγμων was unique amongst Athenian political rhetoric, and that “it is to be remembered that ἀπράγμων is a complimentary term, in Athens as in elsewhere.”¹⁵ Across the board, in elite-penned texts as well as rhetoric composed for mass audiences, the πολυπράγμων receives a negative portrayal as a meddler, a busybody, and officious individual. On the other hand, πολυπραγμοσύνη is also depicted as being a particularly Athenian characteristic, associated particularly with its democratic constitution. It is a fascinating discrepancy.

Scholars of Classical Athens have investigated Athenian πολυπραγμοσύνη in some detail, mostly from the standpoint of understanding political rhetoric and discourse.

¹⁴ Translations of Greek throughout this work, unless otherwise cited, are my own.

¹⁵ Gomme (1956): 121.

Ehrenberg's oft-cited 1947 study "Polypragmosyne: A Study in Greek Politics" presented πολυπραγμοσύνη (and its opposite, ἀπραγμοσύνη) primarily as terms used in the contemporary debate surrounding Athens' aggressive foreign policy stances in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Largely neglecting domestic politics and social life, Ehrenberg saw πολυπραγμοσύνη as "a people's daring and restless optimism," which magnified the rapacity of Athens' foreign policy goals during the Peloponnesian War.¹⁶ Ehrenberg treats these characteristics as exogenous, and is less interested in probing as to how and why such a "restless vitality" and "optimism" of Athens might have actually existed, and rather focuses more on its expression through international politics.

On the other hand, Adkins, writing several decades later, sought to discuss "the reasons for *being said to be* a busybody."¹⁷ By approaching the subject firmly on the level of discourse, he saw πολυπραγμοσύνη as related to the concept of "minding one's own business" (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν) as a term of moral and political constraint, developing out of older, traditional language used by aristocratic classes to keep non-elites out of the sphere of politics and political action. Adkins' work has informed this study by demonstrating that the term πολυπραγμοσύνη does not appear *ex nihilo* from the fifth century political ferment, but draws on far older societal conceptions of acceptable moral and personal behavior and terms of restraint which eventually become politicized.

Finally, the most recent study on πολυπραγμοσύνη, Leigh's *From Polypragmon to Curiosus: Ancient Concepts of Curious and Meddlesome Behavior*, provides a useful overview of many of the term's uses in fifth and fourth-century literary sources. Leigh's concern

¹⁶ Ehrenberg (1947): 51.

¹⁷ Adkins (1976): 301

(especially in his later chapters) is primarily how πολυπραγμοσύνη developed into a term of philosophic discourse both in later Latin and Greek literature, yet his early overview provides insight for the subject not covered by either Adkins or Ehrenberg. He notes that terms like πολυπραγμοσύνη were “profoundly subjective terms: nobody ever saw a *polypragmon* or a *periergos* on the streets of Athens, only someone he or others held to be as such.”¹⁸

What began as a study of the rhetoric surrounding citizenship, personal behavior, and conversations about meddlesomeness and “minding one’s own business” in Athens eventually opened up larger questions into an exploration of how Athenian political citizenship and social life came together on the street level, and the daily experience of social interactions in Athens. I will argue in this paper that the real and non-rhetorical behaviors of both doing many things (being an overinvolved, committed, or active citizen) and knowing many things (being a social busybody) which inspire the negative stereotype of the πολυπράγμων were actually important and useful behaviors to be manifested by citizens in a democratic regime like classical Athens, where information was decentralized and political authority was non-hierarchical.

In my first chapter, I explore the historical antecedents of the πολυπράγμων and ἀπράγμων in Homeric and Archaic Greek literature before the birth of the Athenian democracy in order to demonstrate that both terms arise from elite conceptions about what is and what is not acceptable political behavior for non-elites. Such texts present political action by non-elites as socially disruptive behavior dangerous to the aristocratic status quo, and instead attempt to promote values of restfulness and quietude represented

¹⁸ Leigh (2013): 16.

by ἀπραγμοσύνη. Establishing a connection between such older phrases of social restraint such as “minding one’s own business” (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν) and πολυπραγμοσύνη is important for underscoring the inherently political nature of calling someone a πολυπράγμων in classical Athens.

In my second chapter, I explore how such elite language of social restraint and “minding one’s own business” finds expression in the democratic literature and political context of fifth-century Athens, as well as at the same time defining the primary characteristics of the stereotypical πολυπράγμων. The composite πολυπράγμων appears as an overextended democrat, restless and perpetually active, frequently participating in—and taking advantage of—political institutions such as the law courts and the assembly, while simultaneously investigating the details of the personal lives of their fellow citizens in an onerous fashion. In the fifth-century sources, critiques of πολυπραγμοσύνη are tied to critiques of the development of the Athenian democratic regime.

My third chapter first seeks to use fourth-century legal rhetoric to resolve the contradiction between the presentation of πολυπραγμοσύνη as a particularly democratic characteristic, and the fact that it is a negative term in popular rhetoric that appealed to mass citizen audiences. I highlight the subjectivity of adversarial legal orations to demonstrate that the polypragmatic behaviors of inquisitiveness and meddlesome intrusion that litigants attempt to tar their legal opponents with are praised in other contexts by the political orators as defining positive Athenian attributes of intelligence, action, and patriotic duty.

I then turn to the works of Plato, who ties πολυπραγμοσύνη to his strongest critiques of the Athenian capacity for good government. In arguing as a basic principle that

an individual can only do one thing well, Plato attacks not only the figure of the πολυπράγμων but also the basic ideological principles of Athenian democracy, which institutionally and ideologically encouraged part-time governance by individuals who were not professionals, but instead laborers, farmers, and tradesmen. Plato's dialogues raise powerful questions about how individuals and political regimes gather, define, and employ politically useful expertise and knowledge, a subject intimately connected to the inquisitive and curious side of the πολυπράγμων. The idealized cities presented in his *Republic* and *Laws* seek to limit and regulate the ways in which residents of all classes, citizen status, and occupational position interacted and generated common knowledge through social ties. Plato's doubts about the political utility of knowledge embedded in social interactions—the kind of knowledge that specifically animates the πολυπράγμων—leads him to therefore limit the social conditions that allow for Athenian polypragmatic behavior.

My final chapter seeks to employ modern theories of epistemic democracy, associational theory, and studies of the information-spreading potential of social networks and weak ties, to push back against Plato's claims about social knowledge's lack of utility for good governance and danger of πολυπραγμοσύνη to the polis. It seeks to argue that in an environment like classical Athens, where information, expertise, and knowledge were decentralized, dispersed and often only accessible through social relations, the individual who acted as did a πολυπράγμων was actually at a distinct advantage vis-à-vis his fellow citizens. Those individuals with more connections, broader associational involvement, and who spent more time present in the common spaces of the city of Athens were more likely to be nexuses of socially valuable information. Thus, the πολυπράγμων can be considered as an informal mechanism—along with the institutional mechanisms of participatory

politics—that helps explain the ways in which Athens was able to generate and marshal information and individual expertise effectively for use by the citizen body as a whole. Finally, I hope to have proven that the behaviors behind πολυπραγμοσύνη were not limited to a small group of the Athenian population but instead, were common attributes of Athenian social life and political behavior in general.

Chapter One

“Minding One’s Own Business” in Homeric and Archaic Greek Literature

The first extant occurrence of the word πολυπραγμοσύνη or its derivatives appears in a text dating from the last quarter of the fifth century B.C. as the verb μὴ πολυπρηγμονέειν (Hdt. 3.15.2).¹⁹ However, the scope of one’s search is widely extended if one considers the synonyms (or antonyms) of πολυπραγμοσύνη in the dragnet.²⁰ Scholars have taken various formulations of πολλὰ πράσσειν to mean synonyms for meddling and plotting²¹ and on the other hand, the formulation τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν is used as the opposite of πολυπραγμονεῖν (to meddle), and a synonym for the actions of an ἀπράγμων.²² Yet, when one searches as far back as Homer, these words are not always present, and then the task is to discover—while not projecting a more modern conception of what it means to be meddlesome back into older texts—behaviors and attitudes that may have informed the definitions and attitudes of the classical Athenians.

The most pertinent example of meddlesome behavior in both a social and political sense—involving both questions of political power and class relations—can be found in Book II of the *Iliad*, involving the treatment of the dissenter Thersites in front of the Achaean assembly. At this point in the narrative, Achilles has withdrawn from battle, and

¹⁹ On the dating of Herodotus, see Asheri et al. (2007): 5 “We cannot even establish the year of his death: we can only fix a *terminus ante quem non*: 430 B.C.” adding that “Herodotus has no personal experience of the events of 480/79 B.C.”; Fornara (1981): 149 argues that Herodotus had knowledge of the Archidamian War, focusing on a reference at Hdt. 9.73.3.

²⁰ Allison (1979): 10 notably differs from other writers who seek to connect the terms in a “family of concepts” governed by or related to the substantive πολυπραγμοσύνη. However, hers is largely a minority opinion in the scholarship.

²¹ Ehrenberg (1947): 46.

²² Lateiner (1982): 11.

Agamemnon, in concert with the other “greathearted leaders” decides to test the troops’ dedication by lying to them. He claims that Zeus has prophesized disaster to him, and thus recommends that they give up the fight and return home.²³ When the πληθύς (the largely nameless mass of common soldiers) hears, they immediately begin a stampede towards the ships. Observing this, Odysseus performs crowd control with Agamemnon’s scepter, the symbol of royal authority.²⁴ Odysseus’ treatment of the each chieftain (βασιλῆα καὶ ἔξοχον ἄνδρα, *Il.* 2.149) is widely different from that of each soldier (δήμου τ’ ἄνδρα, *Il.* 2.188). While the captains are met only with spoken rebukes, each common soldier, the δήμου ἄνῆρ, is reproved with harsher language and struck with the staff. Each man is called cowardly and unwarlike (ἀπτόλεμος καὶ ἄναλκις, *Il.* 2.201-202) and is told at least individually, that he does not count in the assembly or in war (ἐν πολέμῳ ἐναρίθμιος οὔτ’ ἐνὶ βουλῇ, *Il.* 2.202-203). For that reason, the correct role of the soldiers in this situation is to sit still and listen (ἦσο καὶ ἄλλων μῦθον ἄκουε, *Il.* 2.200) to their superiors —those that are better than them (φέρτεροί εἰσι, *Il.* 2.201). Quieted down by both Odysseus’ words and his force, most return to the assembly and listen in orderly fashion, with the exception of Thersites, who does the opposite.

²³ The translation of μεγαθύμων ... γερόντων is literally “old men,” but used metaphorically here, as elsewhere, for the princes or leaders of the Achaeans; Lattimore (2011): 94 translates as “high-hearted princes.” While most of the time in the *Iliad* it seems to have the connotation of old, sometimes when used in the plural, as at 2.204, 4.344 it seems to refer to the leaders of the Achaeans.

²⁴ Odysseus’s claim at *Il.* 2.205-6, “εἷς βασιλεύς, ᾧ ἔδωκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω / σκῆπτρόν τ’ ἠδὲ θέμιστας,” not only appeals to royal and monarchic authority, but also divine sanction for the social-political order. Thomas (1966): 389 notes that kingship in Homer is more complex than being grounded simply in religion as a basis, but I do argue that it is used in this sequence and in the subsequent speeches as another way of enforcing the kings’ dominant authority.

Thersites, who has the most detailed description of any character's appearance in the *Iliad*,²⁵ yet appears nowhere else in the poem, has been understood as either a common soldier, or a captain of a similar rank (albeit lower) to Odysseus and Agamemnon. Several late poetic traditions that date to the 2nd Century A.D. or later are known to describe him as part of the Calydonian royal house.²⁶ Plato's Socrates, (Pl. *Gorg.* 525d) however, specifically presents him as a private man (ιδιώτης) in contrast to kings and dynasts (βασιλέας γὰρ καὶ δυνάστας). Plato's contemporary Xenophon (*Mem* 1.2.59) argues that ancient writers and even the accusers of Socrates more broadly believed that the *Iliad* passages in question meant that "the poet approved of chastising common and poor folk."²⁷ In Homer Thersites is described as a physically un-heroic and atypical figure, characterized at length as the most ugly man who came beneath Ilion (αἴσχιστος δὲ ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε, *Il.* 2.216). Often in Greek literature, there is an assumed relationship between handsome physical appearance and one's social status.²⁸ Thersites has none of the telltale signs of political

²⁵ Thalmann (1988): 15.

²⁶ The lost *Aithiopsis*, which dated to the eighth or seventh centuries B.C., describes him as a relative of Diomedes. Marks (2005): 2 cites the bT scholia to *Iliad* 2.212, Apollodorus's *Bibliothēke* 1.7.7, and Pausanias 2.25.2 as textual evidence for this claim. While Apollodorus is dubiously dated to the 1st century B.C. or the 2nd A.D., Pausanias wrote in the 2nd century A.D. The dating of the scholia is difficult to determine.

²⁷ In this case, Xenophon offers that comment to say that Socrates did *not* quote those Homeric lines to endorse such a policy of chastising the poor, but had he quoted those lines as such, his accusers might have thought him to hold such a view.

²⁸ Marks (2005): 4 n. 8 states that while there are some important contrary examples, like the Trojan Herald Dolon, "Positive correlation between physical beauty and social status is of course the norm."; at *Od.* 4.63 Menelaus comments that Telemachus and Peisistratus must be of political nobility simply on the basis of their appearances, unaware of their parentage; also, at *Od.* 24.242 Odysseus notes that Laertes' kingliness is not disguised through his rags; Iros the beggar in *Od.* 18.2, like Thersites, is distinguished by his ugly, almost comical physical appearance.

nobility. He lacks any sort of patronymic,²⁹ has no mention amongst the leaders in the Catalog of the Ships, and is given little backstory. He is typified by exaggerated physical appearance and personal characteristics, such as the “shrill cry” (κεκληγῶς) used to describe his speech. His words are disorderly (ἄκοσμα) and endless (ἄμετροεπής).³⁰

From the perspective of the poem’s elites, and the poem’s narrator, Thersites directly interferes with the process of the reconstituted assembly. Whereas the trend imposed by Agamemnon and Odysseus had been to return the assembly to orderly silence, Thersites interrupts it with his loud voice, exaggerated characteristics, and seemingly endless disorderly energy. He turns his shrill critiques towards Agamemnon, and even if he is not solidly attributed to the soldiers’ class, he is at least channeling their anger. While the mass of soldiers feels this anger in their hearts, they are silent. Thersites, however, actually steps forward from the crowd and articulates the anger of the common soldiers. He loudly and publicly insults Agamemnon, and exhorts the troops to return home—recognizing implicitly that while the members of the πλῆθός are not individually comparable to the Homeric heroes as Odysseus remarked above, they are crucial for the war effort, and have a potent political heft.³¹

²⁹ Thalmann (1998): 75 notes that even Eurykleia, the slave of Laertes and Odysseus’ nursemaid in the *Odyssey* is given a patronymic and a personal history, whereas Thersites, treated with contempt, is not.

³⁰ *Il.* 2.212-215. It is interesting that the depiction of Thersites as a speaker lines up with the depiction of what Carter (1986): 91 calls a “demagogue” in Euripides *Orestes*: “he is a man with an ‘unstoppable mouth’, impudent, persuasive, and bold.” The characterization of Thersites in this passage is not unlike the demagogues that also appear in Aristophanes.

³¹ Raaflaub and Wallace (2007): 26: “Homer knows and assumes mass fighting by the people and considers it crucial for the success of battle.”

Regardless of whether Thersites is a member of the lower class, or simply elucidating an anger that they feel, most important for this study is the realization that “the principal objection to Thersites is his rocking of the boat, his constant urge to “quarrel with the princes” (ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν, *Il.* 2.214).³² Whether it is because of his class—that he argues against the leaders though being far worse (οὐκ ἂν βασιλῆας ἀνὰ στόμ' ἔχων ἀγορεύοις, *Il.* 2.215)—or because he argues for things that are unpleasing to Agamemnon’s honor (τίμη) and excellence (ἀρετή), Thersites is told that the debate is none of his business. Given the language used, he is essentially told that he is “out of order” (οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, *Il.* 2.214). As Adkins notes, κόσμον is part of a broader set of terms, such as μοῖρα, one’s fate or lot, which Homeric speakers use to describe what is correct or incorrect based on one’s station in society.³³ Due to his class, his manners, or simply the fact that he is *not* Agamemnon, it is not within Thersites’ realm of competence to address the assembly, let alone advocate for a whole change in the Greek military policy. Thersites stands and meddles where he ought not.

Rather than a threat, or even a spokesman for the πλεθός, Thersites is presented as neither. He is instead turned into a scapegoat for the tensions between the assembly (which might wish to disobey Agamemnon, but does not), and the princes (who might wish

³² Postlethwaite (1988): 126.

³³ Adkins (1976): 321: “What speech is or is not in accordance with *kosmos* and *moira* will be determined by the *agathoi*, whose values are accepted by all the characters in the Homeric poems: speech or behavior which the *agathoi* regard as being unbeautiful, unpleasing, inappropriate will be stigmatized as not in accordance with *kosmos*; and where such speech infringes the status of the *agathos* and slights his *arête*, its being not in accordance with *kosmos* will override the question of its truth.”

to further discipline their dissenting troops, but do not).³⁴ Thersites is comically struck by Odysseus with the staff—the soldiers laugh even *though* they are grieved at heart (οἱ δὲ καὶ ἄχνύμενοί περ ἐπ' αὐτῷ, *Il.* 2.270)—and after being threatened with a public flogging, rejoins the πλεθὺς in anonymity. The brave braggart is turned into a frightened, helpless wreck.³⁵ This scene sets the pattern for later literature, where individuals seen as politically or socially meddlesome are often treated with shame, and as comic relief.

The political and social context of the situation is important in classifying this as an example of politically meddlesome behavior—an individual getting involved in something that they are said to not belong in—rather than simply disobedience. If Thersites was on the battlefield, disobeying military commands, or an outright traitor, the situation could not function this way. Yet, the context of this interaction is the assembly. As Raaflaub and Wallace note, assemblies are a constant feature of Homeric society.³⁶ While the mob is accorded a function—largely communal approbation or criticism of their leaders' decisions—it is the *basileis* who are the ones entitled to regularly speak as individuals at assemblies, and allowed to propose new courses of action.³⁷ Even though the poem mentions that Thersites had spoken up before to insult Achilles and Odysseus (*Il.* 2.216), it is not clear that this was in the assembly, or whether it was to endorse such a drastic

³⁴ Thalmann (1988): 17: “It is as a marginal comic figure that Thersites, through his defiance and the reaction that it provokes, involuntarily performs a healing function for his society.”

³⁵ *Il.* 2.268-9: ὃ δ' ἄρ' ἔξετο τάρβησέν τε / ἀλγήσας δ' ἀχρεῖον ἰδὼν ἀπομόρξατο δάκρυ, “and he sat down again, frightened, in pain, and looking helplessly about wiped off the tear-drops” (trans. Lattimore).

³⁶ Raaflaub and Wallace (2007): 28.

³⁷ Raaflaub and Wallace (2007): 28: “Only the leaders (*basileis*, sg. *basileus*) speak. The assembled men are limited to expressing their opinion collectively by shouting approval or displeasure, or else by voting with their feet...”

difference in policy from what the *basileis* desired. Thersites, moreover, was operating in the very arena in which one might question the king, or propose new plans for the Achaeans, which makes reading the scene as disobedience less tenable. Even within that social context, however, Odysseus' reaction implies that he—Thersites—was not one of the individuals entitled to do that.³⁸

The idea of stepping outside of one's own proper sphere, and subsequent criticism for it, may be in its most generalized form visible in another brief section of Homer, albeit perhaps less in a paradigmatic situation. When Aphrodite returns to Olympus after having been harmed by Diomedes during the fighting at Troy (*Il.* 5.340-1) she is told that she should not participate in battle, as that was limited to Ares and Athena. Aphrodite (although she has just demonstrated that she can participate in battle, *Il.* 5.314) is to be limited to “the works of marriage” (*Il.* 5.430). On first blush, this seem to be more of a mythological differentiation between the Olympian gods, or even a differentiation of gender roles between the most feminine of the gods, and the two others dedicated to different arts. However, the concept of each God doing what is proper to oneself also accords with the saying that is attributed to Pittacus of Mytilene: “may everyone look after his own things.”³⁹ Asheri in turn connects these two ideas along with a third, the anecdote

³⁸ Kalchas must be invited to speak at the assembly by Achilles, rather than speak up himself, although he knows exactly why Apollo is plaguing the Achaeans (*Il.* 1.62). On the other hand, even Achilles is told not to wrangle with Kings (ἐριζέμεναι βασιλῆϊ) during his dispute with Agamemnon. However, his treatment is entirely different from that of Thersites (*Il.* 1.277-281), although his language is largely the same, cf. Postlethwaite (1988): 126-134

³⁹ Leigh (2013): 17; *Pl. Prt.* 343a identifies him as one of the seven sages of Greece. Asheri et al. (2007): 82 notes that this quote is from the Palatine Anthology VII 89, and it is admittedly hard to verify the age of such quotations. However the phrasing of the quote does appear very

about Gyges, Candaules, and Candaules' wife in the first book of the *Histories*. While Herodotus' *Histories* themselves are a product of the fifth century, his Gyges claims that “men long ago invented rules” (πάλαι δὲ τὰ καλὰ ἀνθρώποισι ἐξέύρηται, Hdt. *Hist.* 1.8.4), one of them being to “consider one's own things” (σκοπεῖν τινὰ τὰ ἑωυτοῦ, Hdt. *Hist.* 1.8.4). Gyges' position is a complicated one because in his situation, he is being asked to look at another man's wife naked, and that man is his social superior. There is not only a boundary of moral propriety, but also a social one—the fact that his own superior is pressuring him to do it initially makes no difference, on first blush—when quoting the proverb, Gyges refuses to transgress that line. That he eventually does so, and is caught by Gyges' wife, perhaps only underscores the cultural power of such an admonition, even if it is folkloric. Breaking it invites consequences.⁴⁰

The earliest extant appearance of a term directly linguistically related to the noun ἀπραγμοσύνη or πολυπραγμοσύνη occurs in a fragment of Archilochus. A fragment notes that, “the life of the ἀπράγμων is most suitable for the elderly, especially if they happen to be simple in their ways, are stupid, or speak nonsense” (βίος δ' ἀπράγμων τοῖς γέρουσι συμφέρει, τύχοιεν ἀπλοῖ τοῖς τρόποις / ἢ μακκοᾶν μέλλοιεν ἢ ληρεῖν ὄλωσ, Archil. fr. 330, Loeb Edition). In this sense ἀπράγμων is a synonym for a retired and reserved life, and while not functioning exactly as an antonym of πολυπραγμοσύνη implies that for the elderly there is a proper behavior and attitude towards life, especially public life. The societal group of old men is praised for being retiring, withdrawn, and idle in public life,

similar to the formulation of the phrase τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, which does become a synonym for ἀπραγμοσύνη.

⁴⁰ Leigh (2013): 17 calls this one of the antecedents of Plato's description of πολυπραγμοσύνη in *Republic* 433a-b.

much as Thersites should be, and other groups in later literature will be blamed for their intrusion and participation. Thus, there are those who ought be active, and those who ought not. Although the political and social context of such a limited fragment is hard to define, it demonstrates an early proscriptive use of ἀπραγμοσύνη. Neither something to be blamed or praised outright, quietude is valued for a certain group of people, and presumably not praised for others.

Another antecedent and related term to ἀπραγμοσύνη identified by both Ehrenberg and Carter is the term ἡσυχία, which is roughly equivalent to the word quietude, peacefulness, and tranquility.⁴¹ It is used often to denote a peaceful or restful state of mind of an individual, as in Homer and the Homeric Hymns.⁴² It is used similarly by Pindar to refer not only to a state of inner peace and harmonious quiet for the individual, but also for the state and political community as a whole.⁴³ In Pindar’s work, and in that of other Greek lyric poets in the seventh and sixth centuries, tranquility of both soul and of the state is to be desired and is praised.⁴⁴ For, without it, according to Theognis, cities will be gripped by “public ills, discord, and inter-communal violence” (Thgn. 1.43-52). In this genre of poetry ἡσυχία is contrasted with ὕβρις—violence and ambition—and κόρος—surfeit and

⁴¹ Ehrenberg (1947): 46; Carter (1986): 42.

⁴² *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 356, 438; *Hom. Il.* 21.598; *Hom. Od.* 18.22.

⁴³ “Pindar becomes especially eloquent when he sings of *hesychia*: peace, tranquility, order, and stability; almost any good which can befall a city may be summed up in it” (Carter (1986): 42).

⁴⁴ Pindar praises ἡσυχία both as a personified characteristic, as well as an adjective of cities and individuals: “I praise a man who is most eager / in the raising of horses / who rejoices in being hospitable to all guests / and whose thoughts are turned towards city-loving peace” (ἐπεὶ νιν αἰνέω μάλα μὲν / τροφαῖς ἑτοῖμον ἵππων, / χαίροντά τε ξενίαις πανδόκοις / καὶ πρὸς ἄσυχίαν φιλόπολιν καθαρᾷ γνώμα τετραμμένον, *Pind. Ol.* 4.16).

superfluity.⁴⁵ ἡσυχία as a characteristic of a city as a whole is also presented as a complementary value to εὐνομία, a personified aristocratic “norm of good behavior” characterized by moderation.⁴⁶

Pindar’s poetry, which honored victors in the Panhellenic athletic contests, both celebrates and reflects the values of the aristocratic social structure that provided for both the funding and training of the athletic victors.⁴⁷ Much like the Homeric admonition to act in accordance with one’s lot or station (κατὰ κόσμον), Pindar’s work justifies an existing aristocratic ruling order and mindset. When he heaps praises on ἡσυχία and advocates for quiet in the city, it is because the opposite—violence and *stasis*—threatens that well-maintained social order of peace and obedience to laws represented by εὐνομία.⁴⁸ In some ways, promoting quietude—stillness, quiet and calm in an individual or place—can be seen as promoting *quietism*—acceptance of things as they are. Again, in this case, the praise of quietude does not apply equally to those who live in the city and those who rule it. In Pindar’s *Pythian* 4, he praises the youth who has learned both to hate ὕβρις and to not strive against the nobles (ἔμαθε δ’ ὑβρίζοντα μισεῖν ... οὐκ ἐρίζων ἀντία τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, Pind. *Pyth.* 4.284-285).⁴⁹ The probable commissioner of this poem, Damophilus, has been exiled from Cyrene, and in reference to his own situation, Pindar makes the violence of ὕβρις—previously criticized in the city writ large—explicitly political, as part of a plea to revoke

⁴⁵ Carter (1986): 43.

⁴⁶ Carter (1986): 43.

⁴⁷ Burnett (1987): 434; Stoneman (2014): 6.

⁴⁸ Andrewes (1938): 89: *Εὐνομία* is “the noun of εὐνομος and εὐνομοῦμαι, meaning discipline and good order: a condition in which the citizens obey the law, not a condition of the state in which the laws are good.”

⁴⁹ Adkins (1976): 322 sees this as reflecting a general sentiment, and “would serve to convict of *hubris* any social inferior who endeavored to assert his rights against an *agathos*.”

his exile.⁵⁰ Damophilus has learned his lesson to not strive against those who are better than he, in this case, the rulers of Cyrene. However, this type of ἡσυχία is not unqualifiedly praised, especially for the leaders of the city. Often, they must be active and engaged, not delaying accomplishments, and prepared to seize the moment when opportunity is given (οὐδὲ μακύνων τέλος οὐδέν, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς / πρὸς ἀνθρώπων βραχὺ μέτρον ἔχει, Pind. *Ol.* 4.285-6). Pindar is praising noble, politically involved, and actively athletic young men, and his calls for ἡσυχία on behalf of the city are not the same as asking those in power to be ἀπράγμων.

Pindar, as might be rightly noted, is not an author who writes on particularly democratic or Athenian themes. Pindar was born around 520 B.C. and resided for much of his life in Thebes, which remained solidly oligarchic while the Athenians changed their constitution to a more democratic one in 508/507 B.C.⁵¹ Wade-Gery argued that the values espoused in Pindar's poems, while aristocratic, were also the values of Greek elites internationally.⁵² Aristocratic Athenian families, who belonged in the same social class and strata as the ruling classes in other Greek *poleis* even as their own city turned towards democratic government, also commissioned Pindar's work.⁵³ Ober argues that such values were part of a "generalized 'panhellenic' aristocratic ideology," that existed during the archaic period, coinciding with aristocratic and elite rule in many Greek cities.⁵⁴ As Wade-Gery argues, such values could be found amongst aristocratic Athenian families even down

⁵⁰ Race (1997): 264.

⁵¹ Hansen and Nielsen (2004): 455.

⁵² Wade-Gery (1932): 210.

⁵³ E.g. *Pythian* 7, as per Stoneman (2014): 23.

⁵⁴ Ober (1989): 312.

to the eve of the Peloponnesian war, seeing a direct personal tie between Pindar and the family of Thucydides, son of Melesias, the aristocratic rival of Pericles in Athenian politics.⁵⁵

However, even if the values of ἡσυχία and εὐνομία, along with the social class that supported them, existed at Athens into the democratic period, it should still be noted that most of the cities Pindar describes as containing the laudatory characteristics of ἡσυχία and εὐνομία are Dorian cities that are in many ways very different from Athens. Thebes, Opous, and Corinth, which are praised both for their values of internal peace, unity, and concord, were all oligarchies at the time, while tyrants governed Aegina and Cyrene.⁵⁶ Sparta is described by in similar terms by Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.65) as also experiencing εὐνομία, for which it became the example *par excellence*. While there is a limit to how far Pindar's values of quietude and a stable and aristocratic social order may be extended to an Athenian context, nonetheless they cannot be discounted for this study. In fact, the image of the peaceful, quiet, and well-ordered Dorian *polity* emerges as a foil and contrast to that of the Athenians.

Yet, even the political discourse of Archaic Athens parallels some of the values found in Pindar. Under the period of aristocratic and elite rule before the Peisistratids and later the establishment of the democracy, the “generalized ‘panhellenic’ aristocratic ideology” mentioned by Ober found its own expression in the Athenian context. The sixth century lawgiver of Athens Solon appeals to similar values in a poetic fragment, part of a

⁵⁵ Wade-Gery (1932): 210.

⁵⁶ Carter (1986): 44, citing evidence for Thebes in *Pind. Pae* 1.10; *Corinth Ol.* 13.6; *Cyrene Pyth.* 5.67; *Aegina Isthm.* 5.22.

larger work justifying and explaining his reorganization of the constitution of Athens in the 590s. He describes his political and economic reforms and education of the Athenians as bringing “lawfulness” to the city.⁵⁷ In the face of violence and turmoil in the city of Athens between elites and non-elites, Solon’s most famous reforms—specifically his abolition of enslavement for debt and opening of the highest political offices on the basis of wealth, rather than solely birth—were in the interest of reducing tensions between elites as well as between the rulers and the poorer populace.⁵⁸ By abolishing debt-bondage, as well as offering the lowest classes minimal rights in the courts and assembly, a firm delineation was made between slave and citizen, ensuring that the lower classes were more endeared towards the upper classes. On the other hand, the governing aristocrats, by co-opting those who were rich but not wellborn into the apparatus of government, allowed the new elite of wealth to partake in ruling rather than side with the lower classes against the existing elite order.⁵⁹ It was a policy geared towards εὐνομία and in consonance with the values embodied by ἡσυχία in the lyric poets, which sought to protect the stability of the aristocratic order by redefining, or perhaps for the first time actually defining, the rights and privileges of different groups in Athenian society.

Another fragment of Solon’s sheds more light on the relationship of quiet lawfulness to the values of κόρος (surfeit) and ὕβρις that Pindar’s lyric work decries:

δῆμος δ’ ὧδ’ ἂν ἄριστα σὺν ἡγεμόνεσσιν ἔποιτο,
μήτε λίην ἀνεθείς μήτε βιαζόμενος
τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὕβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἔπηται

⁵⁷ Solon fr. 4, ln. 32.

⁵⁸ Ober (1989): 63; *Ath. Pol.* 6.1 for the abolition of debt-bondage, *Ath. Pol.* 7-8 for the opening of offices based on criteria of wealth.

⁵⁹ Ober (1989): 62-63.

ἀνθρώποις ὅποσσις μὴ νόος ἄρτιος ἦ.

“And in this way the masses would best follow their leaders,
if they are neither given too much freedom nor subjected to too much
restraint.

For excess breeds insolence, whenever
great prosperity comes to men who are not sound of mind.”

(Solon, fr. 6, trans. Gerber)

Solon’s fragment here is revealing because it includes both the Pindaric and lyric conception of *κόρος* and *ὑβρις* in the context of early Athenian domestic politics. The *δῆμος* ought follow their leaders, being less sound or suitable (*ἄρτιος*) than the elites are. Desiring for more freedom than one is entitled to, a form of *κόρος*, makes one more likely to commit *ὑβρις*, and led to the violence that Solon’s reforms sought to cure in the first place.⁶⁰ Solon himself claimed that he did not give the *demos* more than they deserved, nor did he harm them unduly.⁶¹ The implication here is that to not follow the leaders of the people is to lead to the violence and disorder of *ὑβρις*, which had been opposed to *εὐνομία* and *ἡσυχία* in Pindar’s poetry. Such language firmly reinforces a particular social order—the leaders are to lead, the rest of the citizens, although more enfranchised than previously, are to be led. Again, an emergent dynamic is clear. In certain poetry of the Archaic and early classical period, the concepts of quietude on behalf of a city are also equated with an understanding and acceptance of elite political authority. In Pindar and Solon at least *ὑβρις*, either by other elites or especially by the masses, involves disrupting that acceptance.

⁶⁰ Solon fr. 4, ln. 32-35: *εὐνομία* “τραχέα λειαίνει, παύει κόρον, ὑβριν ἀμαυροῖ”, “makes the rough smooth, stops excess, and weakens *hubris*.”

⁶¹ *Ath. Pol.* 12.1.

In Herodotus one sees a conflation between the negative political and social implications of terms such as πολυπραγμοσύνη and ὕβρις. Herodotus uses the term πολυπραγμοσύνη as he describes the revolt of the formerly deposed Egyptian king, Psammenitus, against the Persian King Cambyses, who had been keeping him at the Persian court since his deposition. Herodotus writes that due to Persian traditions about re-enthroning rulers as client kings, Psammenitus might have retained his position “had he known not to meddle” (εἰ δὲ καὶ ἠπιστήθη μὴ πολυπρηγμονέειν, Hdt. 3.15.2). In this case the meaning of πολυπρηγμονέειν is somewhat similar to intriguing, or plotting, and is depicted negatively. Herodotus is less interested in proscribing a social value than in analyzing a historical situation—he seems to be employing language rather than using it to shape it into a form of discourse. He seems to be saying that had Psammenitus been an ἀπράγων in this situation his position would have been secure. Yet Herodotus also labels a similar situation, a revolt by the Egyptians under the subsequent king Darius, not as πολυπραγμοσύνη but as an act of ὕβρις.⁶² In this way, πολυπραγμοσύνη is also co-opted into the emergent axis of values both describing and proscribing different types of social behavior. Additionally, a similar reference in Herodotus involves ἡσυχία. When Herodotus describes the Spartan desire to go to war with their neighbors, the Arcadians, in an early

⁶² Adkins (1976): 323 argues that the use of πολυπραγμοσύνη rather than *hubris* in the democratic period reflects a secularization of religious beliefs reflected in language, arguing that elites begin to use the term πολυπραγμοσύνη because those individuals they wish to constrain no longer hold the religious beliefs associated with *hubris* that would render it a potent word of restraint. My only comment, which might not negate this view but complicate it, would be the fact that by the fifth and fourth centuries, a law against acts of *hubris* had been established and was considered a particularly democratic law. If what Adkins says is correct, it is possible that the language of wanton violence as dangerous to the community had been appropriated by democratic ideology to refer to the upper classes instead. Cf. Murray (1990): 139.

part of the *Histories*, he says that the Spartans “were no longer eager to keep quiet” (οὐκέτι ἀπέχρα ἡσυχίην ἄγειν, 1.66.1). Such activity on the part of Sparta is later called τῶν Σπαρτιητέων τὴν πλεονεξίην, with πλεονεξία sharing significance with both ὕβρις and κόρος.⁶³

In presenting these examples from Homer, the lyric poets, and Herodotus, I have sought to demonstrate and define a family of linguistic terms that relate to how Greek elites (largely the readers and writers of texts in the pre-classical period) talked about the relationship between minding one’s own things, or business, and appropriate social and political behavior. While the terms ἀπράγμων and πολυπράγμων largely do not appear in discourse until the fifth century B.C., praises and criticisms of what those ideas represent are present through other ideas and values. On the one hand the praises of ἡσυχία and εὐνομία are equated with a tranquil, retired, and politically quietist and orderly populace in the face of the established ruling classes. On the other hand, disruption of the given social and political order is presented as violent ὕβρις, exemplified in the abstract by Solon’s poetry and Pindar’s work but given a full form in Homer’s Thersites sequence. Both usages attest to existing elite attitudes towards behaviors that later become praised or blamed as πολυπραγμοσύνη and ἀπραγμοσύνη. Herodotus’s equation of the term to πολυπρηγμονέειν with committing an act of ὕβρις implies that by the fifth century, one does not go too far in categorizing such acts of social disruption as related to busybodiness, or political meddling, in a negative sense. Thus, two emergent axes can be seen: πολυπραγμοσύνη—πολλὰ πράττειν—ὕβρις and ἀπραγμοσύνη—τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν—ἡσυχία. Given the relative paucity of our sources in the classical period, these axes of values, and

⁶³ Ehrenberg (1947): 46.

the broader ideas that they portray, are necessary for understanding the full implications of naming somebody an ἀπράγμων or πολυπράγμων in democratic Athens.

Chapter Two

Being a Busybody in Fifth-Century Athens

By the time that the term πολυπράγμων and its derivatives first appear in extant literature, the world of democratic Athens is far different from that of the Homeric *basileus* or the aristocratically ordered cities of the late Archaic period.⁶⁴ Athenian elites continued to leverage their family ties, wealth, and status to be the chief policymakers and leaders of the *polis*, but they were operating in an increasingly democratic context.⁶⁵ Reforms, spurred on both by exogenous events such as the increase of the power of the landless *thetes* after the naval victory at Salamis, as well as by competition amongst elites themselves slowly created a situation in which, by the 430s, major policy decisions were now made by mass bodies of the citizenry.⁶⁶

Conversations amongst elites in Athens about types of citizenship, appropriate political behavior, and the correct deference—or lack thereof—to political leaders were occurring in a context where non-elites now had the ability to participate in the political processes of the *polis* as individuals. Unlike in archaic cities, where the power of the lower classes could only be expressed through mass action, in democratic Athens, the regular citizen, whether an urban worker in the city, or a peasant farmer in living in the countryside of Attica, had certain political rights (and obligations) that enabled him to participate directly in decision-making processes. Such opportunities included the Council of 500, which was chosen by lot, and required approximately three-fourths of the council

⁶⁴ Asheri et al. (2007): 3.

⁶⁵ Ober (1989): 85.

⁶⁶ Ober (1989): 83-85.

members to be new each year, meaning that a high percentage of the Athenian population had to serve on the council for the system to work.⁶⁷ Additionally, under the Athenian democracy of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., any citizen, regardless of wealth or social status, had the right to bring a case to the popular courts to prosecute a wrongdoer on public charges.⁶⁸ This was not only considered a crucial right of the democracy, but also was seen as providing another check on elite citizens by less powerful ones. Importantly, it was viewed as a particularly *democratic* right. It was also necessary for the structure of the *polis* to function since Athens had no public prosecutor. Law-breakers had to be voluntarily prosecuted by their fellow citizens.⁶⁹

Given that the Athenian *demos* legitimately wielded power that could restrict the powers of elite citizens, it seems that elite conversations and the promotion of certain norms of political participation had to be more nuanced. If critiques were to be made publicly to mass audiences, they often had to be framed as constructive criticisms—not negating the premises of the democracy—or as promoting a different type of democratic citizenship altogether.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Hansen (1985): 57. Hansen is primarily concerned with the fourth century, where epigraphic lists of council-members are more readily available. Hansen argues that that century, the total population of Attica was around 30,000 people. Therefore the rotation of the council members and bans on serving more than twice would have meant more than 50% of the population would have taken part in the council—the agenda-setting body of the democracy—during their own lifetime. In the fifth century, where the population was larger and our data is scarcer, presumably that percentage would most likely have been lower, but still significant.

⁶⁸ Osborne (1990): 83.

⁶⁹ Hansen (1999): 193.

⁷⁰ Ober (1998): 126 argues that the comic poet was essentially an “internal critic of the democratic regime.”

It is perhaps in such a context that a term like πολυπράγμων comes into use as a proscriptive term. While its genesis might have been connected to the term ὕβρις, it carries fewer semi-religious and violent overtones. It is a more moderate word employed to critique what was rapidly becoming the dominant political ideology.⁷¹ Within the democracy, telling someone to mind their own business, or implying that it is not proper for them to act in a given political realm, was a way of delineating specific social lines that ought not be crossed, even when the institutional basis for those lines no longer existed.

I would assert, then, that one may construct a basic set of categories as to how the terms πολυπράγμων and ἀπράγμων (and the synonymous concepts that they represent) are used to promote or proscribe certain behavior in fifth-century Athens. The first category is the criticism of the πολυπράγμων, the second is the praise of the ἀπράγμων, and the third is the criticism of the ἀπράγμων. The obviously missing final category in this scheme, the praise of the politically busy and nosy citizen, will be pursued and investigated further at length in subsequent chapters of this work.

It is true that not all social behavior which was described as meddling in classical Athens in the fifth century sources was necessarily and explicitly political. In Aristophanes' *Peace*, the protagonist Trygaeus drives off a poor soothsayer who attempts to join his feast uninvited by saying that, "you're certainly nosy, whoever you are." (πολλὰ πράττεις, ὅστις εἶ, *Ar. Pax*, 1058). Another example relating to both the household and private relationships is the example of the Chorus of Women of Troezen in Euripides'

⁷¹ Ober (1998): 40 argues that by the late fifth-century, "The many' gained control of the public language employed in political deliberations, and so the primary context for felicitous speech performance in Athens was defined by popular, not elite, ideology."

Hippolytus, who declare—upon being asked whether they should enter the Queen’s home and remove her from her suicide noose—“to meddle is not the safe course in life” (τὸ πολλὰ πράσσειν οὐκ ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ βίου, Eur. *Hip.* 785). Yet in that case, as in another example in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, meddling is associated with disobeying one’s master.⁷² The question of meddling and authority also can be found in Herodotus’s story of Aristagoras and Megabates.⁷³ A fragment of Pherecrates, writing slightly earlier than Aristophanes, from 440-410 B.C.,⁷⁴ although delightfully vague on the exact situation, involves a character telling those who think themselves clever that they shouldn’t act the busybody (δοκησιδεξίων ... μὴ πολυπραγμόνει, Pherec. fr. 163). Interestingly enough, the adjectives and synonyms of clever sometimes have negative implications in the context of Athenian politics, often being associated with rhetoric or unfair linguistic or intellectual cunning.⁷⁵ This fragment seems to imply a relationship with those intellectual qualities of curiousness and being a meddler that will become more evident in later Athenian literature.

The association of cleverness with meddling in contrast to simple or unsophisticated speech continues in a comic fragment from Eupolis, a contemporary of Aristophanes, which states that a character “is not really a πολυπράγμων, but rather simple.” (οὐ γὰρ πολυπράγμων ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ ἀπλήγιος, Eur. Fr. 238).⁷⁶ In this case, the

⁷² Ar. *Ran.* 748-9. Ξανθίας: τί δὲ πολλὰ πράττων; / Οἰκέτης: ὡς μὰ Δί’ οὐδὲν οἶδ’ ἐγώ, “Xanthias: and what about meddling? / Slave: By Zeus, I don’t know anything else.”

⁷³ Cf. in Hdt. 5.33.1-4, Aristagoras and Megabates argue over who has authority in their given situation. Aristagoras, claiming that Megabates was sent by the Persian King to obey his orders, asks him “τί πολλὰ πρήσσεις”; “why do you meddle?”

⁷⁴ Storey (2011): 410.

⁷⁵ In Pl. *Ap.* 17b Socrates defends himself against charges that he is δεινός, clever or skillful in speaking, to name one case.

⁷⁶ Storey (2011): 225-26.

πολυπράγμων is contrasted to the ἀπλήγιος, which also means “clad in a single garment,” perhaps signifying social status or financial means. It is also a synonym for the metaphorical ἀπλός, which can mean simple, plain, or simple minded. That sophistication and intelligence of a negative quality is associated with the individual πολυπράγμων is a theme directly mirrored in Aristophanes’ works, which are some of the best fifth-century examples for criticisms of the πολυπράγμων.

The πολυπράγμων, especially as found in Aristophanes, is a product of the urban *polis*—he spends his time close to the agora, the assembly, and the law courts (the central political centers of urban Athens). In Aristophanes, characters labeled as πολυπράγμων or exhibiting πολυπραγμοσύνη are most often associated with the stock character of the sycophant. In Athenian comedy and court oratory, the sycophant was seen as someone who abused the rights given to citizens under the Athenian legal system, and imposed onerous litigation on their fellow citizens.⁷⁷ If πολυπράγμων can be considered a mildly negative term, being labeled a sycophant in discourse was entirely negative.⁷⁸ In Athenian literature abuse of the right to prosecute includes the motivation of making money off of lawsuits, either through outright extortion (for real charges)⁷⁹ or through bringing false charges.⁸⁰ The sycophant is in particular a product of the city because he (in many depictions) attempts to live off of the earnings of his extortions and his lawsuits,⁸¹

⁷⁷ Harvey (1990): 103.

⁷⁸ Harvey (1990): 108-109 has a quite impressive listing of many of the negative terms to describe the sycophant and the locations that they appear in Greek literature.

⁷⁹ Harvey (1990): 110.

⁸⁰ Harvey (1990): 112.

⁸¹ Osborne (1990): 86. “...It seems to have become standard to allege sycophancy in any case where a poor man was involved as plaintiff.”

something only possible if one's residence is near the agora and the courts. In Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, when the protagonist Dikaeopolis sets up his own reformed agora in the countryside, he specifically bans sycophants from its premises.⁸² The sycophant in Aristophanes is important as a critique of πολυπραγμοσύνη because it is most often an example of a contested discourse about civic duty and participation.

In Aristophanes, while most of the sycophants (all of whom are introduced as sycophants, thus leaving the audience little room for doubt) are given short shrift and either thrashed or comically run off stage, they do however offer a vision of their role as democratic citizens in which being πολυπράγμων is a positive characteristic.⁸³ In Aristophanes, the sycophantic characters make the claim that being meddling is actually part and parcel of being a good citizen. The sycophant in Aristophanes' *Wealth* (facing off against the "just man" Dikaos) says that he is in fact a "useful and good citizen, as well as a patriotic one."⁸⁴ The fact that the sycophant claims he is χρηστός was most notably used for comic effect, as χρηστός was a term most often applied by the aristocratic Athenian elite to themselves.⁸⁵ Later, as the sycophant is being thrashed off stage, he is called the opposite of χρηστός, "a vile champion" (πονηρόν γ' ἄρα προστάτην). πονηρός was a term often used in opposition to χρηστός, and was often applied to political leaders in the

⁸² *Ar. Ach.* 725-727.

⁸³ Adkins (1976): 309: "This is of course, character assassination rather than portrayal, as befits a comedy. To introduce anyone as 'sycophant' already prejudices the question of the respectability of his activities..."

⁸⁴ *Ar. Plut.* 901-902.

⁸⁵ Ober (1989): 251: "The Athenian aristocrat was differentiated from, and might be perceived to be better than, the non-aristocrat because he was thought to have inherited from his ancestors certain desirable traits—especially the trait of being noble and good (*agathos*) and physically beautiful (*kalos*)—and because he acted differently from other men." Ober notes that *chrestoi* is one of the many words used to describe this group.

late fifth century like Hyperbolus (by their elite rivals), who might have in reality been wealthy, but also lacked elite attributes, and were comically presented by critics as base, poor, and slavish. Their political style is particularly seen as serving as unelected speakers, allotted councilmembers, and volunteer prosecutors.⁸⁶ Therefore, a connection is not only made with a class distinction, but a type of politics that was very different from the elite modes of gaining political power.

Crucial to the conception of this sycophant's political role is being a busybody. The rest of the sequence is worth quoting:

ΔΙ: πῶς οὖν διέζης ἢ πόθεν μηδὲν ποιῶν;
 ΣΥ: τῶν τῆς πόλεως εἰμ' ἐπιμελητῆς πραγμάτων καὶ τῶν ἰδίων πάντων.
 ΔΙ: σύ; τί μαθῶν;
 ΣΥ: βούλομαι.
 ΔΙ: πῶς οὖν ἂν εἴης χρηστός, ὃ τοιχωρύχε, εἴ σοι προσῆκον μηδὲν εἶτ' ἀπεχθάνει; 910
 ΣΥ: οὐ γὰρ προσήκει τὴν ἑμαυτοῦ μοι πόλιν
 εὐεργετεῖν, ὃ κέπφε, καθ' ὅσον ἂν σθένω;
 ΔΙ: εὐεργετεῖν οὖν ἐστι τὸ πολυπραγμονεῖν;
 ΣΥ: τὸ μὲν οὖν βοηθεῖν τοῖς νόμοις τοῖς κειμένοις
 καὶ μὴ ἴπιτρέπειν ἑάν τις ἐξαμαρτάνῃ. 915
 ΔΙ: οὐκ οὖν δικαστὰς ἐξεπίτηδες ἢ πόλις ἄρχειν καθίστησιν;
 ΣΥ: κατηγορεῖ δὲ τίς;
 ΔΙ: ὁ βουλόμενος.
 ΣΥ: οὐκ οὖν ἐκεῖνός εἰμ' ἐγώ; ὥστ' εἰς ἔμ' ἦκει τῆς πόλεως τὰ πράγματα.
 ΔΙ: νῆ Δία, πονηρόν γ' ἄρα προστάτην ἔχει. 920
 ἐκεῖνο δ' οὐ βούλοισ' ἂν, ἡσυχίαν ἔχων ζῆν ἀργός;
 ΣΥ: ἀλλὰ προβατίου βίον λέγεις,
 εἰ μὴ φανεῖται διατριβὴ τις τῷ βίῳ.

(Ar. Plut. 906-925)

⁸⁶ Rosenbloom (2004): 61. "Leaders marked *poneros* perform speaking roles that require knowledge of political and legal procedure, but they lack traditional elite attributes; they serve as un-elected *rhetores* and allotted *bouleutai*. They intensify political competition by representing the demos when they prosecute *graphai* and charges arising from *euthynai*, styling themselves 'friends of the people' (φιλόδημοι) and defenders of democracy."

The sycophant notes that his employment (referencing the monetary motivation behind sycophancy) is to be the “manager of all private and public affairs” (907), and when asked as to how he has that right, he claims, “βούλομαι” (909), referencing, of course, the nomenclature for the right to bring cases to juries, as well as for initiating other citizen action, that of “*ho boulomenos*.” He calls his actions of bringing cases to uphold the established laws (βοηθεῖν τοῖς νόμοις τοῖς κειμένοις) to be a benefaction to the city (εὐεργετεῖν). Interesting enough, the sycophant’s enemy, the “just man,” does not argue with the sycophant’s legal right to engage in political action as a *boulomenos* (919) in theory.⁸⁷ He instead decries the nature in which it is done, calling such actions as “πολυπραγμανεῖν” (913), or “to meddle.” The sycophant is told by Dikaos that the matters of the city “τῶν τῆς πόλεως” and private life “τῶν ἰδίων πάντων” are not his business or concern “εἴ σοι προσῆκον μηδέν” (910), meaning they are not fitting for him to do, because of his vile character, rather than being specifically illegal. In fact, he is well within his citizen rights.⁸⁸ The conversation goes on to use more language that fits on the πολυπράγμων-ἀπράγμων axis. When Dikaos asks, why can’t you keep quiet and live an idle life (ἡσυχίαν ἔχων ζῆν ἀργός)—here again ἡσυχία is opposed to activity, in this case explicitly political—he responds that such a life would be living like a sheep (προβατίου βίον, 921-922). Before being humiliated and pushed off stage, the sycophant makes one more claim that appears preposterous in this context, but it also gives a sense of why the πολυπράγμων might justify

⁸⁷ Sommerstein (2001): 194 notes that “the Informer is allowed to present an argument which has considerable *prima facie* plausibility and which his antagonists do not refute but merely ignore, as if instinct rather than reason assured them it must be wrong.”

⁸⁸ Sommerstein (2001): 194: “It was a completely sound argument (since no one envisaged the alternative of creating a state prosecution service).”

bringing his cases forward, saying that the god Wealth is “guilty of attempting to subvert the democracy, acting on his own authority” (945).

The πολυπράγμων presented as justifying his meddling actions by appealing to patriotism and duty is featured elsewhere in Aristophanes. In the *Acharnians*, a sycophant has somehow arrived at Dikaeopolis’ newly instituted agora, and attempts to denounce as contraband a Megaran and his goods. Dikaeopolis drives him out, but not before the sycophant cries, “may I not denounce our enemies?” (οὐ γὰρ φανῶ τοὺς πολεμίους; *Ar. Ach.* 827). The sycophant makes a patriotic appeal, but Dikaeopolis dismisses him, saying that he will bear the consequences of such meddling rather than the Megaran (πολυπραγμοσύνη νῦν ἐξ κεφαλὴν τράποιτ’ ἐμοί, *Ar. Ach.* 836). Leigh sums up the situation insightfully when stating, “the active citizen constantly runs the risk of being dismissed not as a patriot but as a busybody.”⁸⁹

Such a perception seems equally present in the Old Oligarch’s mention of πολυπραγμοσύνη in politics. This anonymous elite writer who authored a pamphlet, possibly between the 430s and 410s, deeply critical of Athenian democracy, complains that it is always the wealthy and well born (πλούσιος ἢ γενναῖος) that are demonized in comedy.⁹⁰ He argues that rarely are “the poor or members of the masses” (τῶν πενήτων καὶ τῶν δημοτικῶν) comedized⁹¹ except for when they have been “meddling in others’ affairs, or trying to rise above their position,” so people feel no problem with them being abused by

⁸⁹ Leigh (2013): 24.

⁹⁰ Osborne (2004): 9.

⁹¹ Adkins (1976): 307 uses this as a translation of κωμωδέω, satirize, or make fun of someone.

the poets (μη̄ διᾱ πολυπραγμοσύνην καὶ διᾱ τὸ ζητεῖν πλέον τι ἔχειν τοῦ δήμου).⁹² The Old Oligarch seems to assume that the leaders of the *demos* satirized in comedy try to seek to have more than the *demos* (ζητεῖν πλέον τι ἔχειν).⁹³ Such language implies that there is a specific sphere that both the *demos* and the men who get above it should be participating in. In the Old Oligarch's telling, to emerge from that mass by exercising certain citizen rights, even if one claims to be arguing for the good of that larger body, is to expose oneself to claims that one is being meddlesome, or even worse, trying to infringe on the populace of mass citizens that they claim to speak to.

The situation that the Old Oligarch sets up seems to be directly related to, and possibly even to explain the dynamics of the Thersites sequence that appeared in Homer. Aristophanes' plays, like the Homeric text, both vilify the meddling character, the disruptive influence and individual who steps out of the anonymous mass, but also still allow his voice to be heard. Thalmann sees the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as ideological tools of an aristocratic elite, composed during the development of the *polis*, and serving to legitimize their hold on power (having replaced the *basileis*, yet still dominating the lower classes) by presenting an idealized vision of the heroic hierarchy.⁹⁴ These poems did so, however, even while being performed to

⁹² Ps.-Xen. *Ath.Pol.* 2.18.

⁹³ Adkins (1976): 310: "Dicaeus and Aristophanes, and the Old Oligarch, contrive to give the impression that such *polupragmones* and "sycophants" were drawn exclusively from the poorer citizens of Athens, and that other members of the *demos* disapproved so much of their activities that they would have tolerated their being "comedized" by the comic poets."

⁹⁴ Thalmann (1998): 275; Powell (2007): 59 says "Most scholars now agree that Homer's world, while embodying artifacts from earlier times, from the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, is mostly the world of his own day, the early Archaic Period of the eight century B.C."

audiences that were socioeconomically and ideologically diverse.⁹⁵ Perhaps there were those who might sympathize with the claims Thersites makes, were he not presented as such a vilified character. In fact, by giving Thersites his chance to speak while making him as comedically grotesque to the audience as possible, Thersites is distanced from the soldiers on whose behalf he is arguing. The theatre audience in Athens was similarly socioeconomically diverse, and although mass theater is a democratic institution, plays were also produced by and written by elite writers.⁹⁶ Therefore, the same ideological contestation might be at play.⁹⁷ Much like Thersites is “comedized,” and the class critic of the Homeric power structure is made into a comic scapegoat, and his criticisms negated by being distanced from the body that he claims to represent, so is the figure of the πολυπράγμων and sycophant in Aristophanic comedy. Presenting those who exercise certain democratic rights and claim to be working in the interests of the democracy as both separate from and even detrimental to the rest of the democratic community is a form of scapegoating in its own way. Matthew Christ argues that in Aristophanes’ sequences, the “process of intrusion and expulsion diminishes the status of the sycophant as outsider that must be shunned.”⁹⁸ By

⁹⁵ Thalmann (1988): 27-28: “early Greek epic was publicly performed and thus occupied a central position in its society”; Scodel (2009): 176 agrees, saying “The evidence tells strongly against such a restriction of the audience, although the presence of bards at elite feasts certainly implies that some people had more opportunity than others to enjoy epic performances.”

⁹⁶ Roselli (2011): 9.

⁹⁷ Ober (1989): 152 argues that Athenian theater reflected ideological contestation in other respects, saying, “Athenian theatrical performance was closely bound up in the attempt to resolve the contradictory social values of intense competition and political unity.”

⁹⁸ Christ (1998): 53. Christ also argues on 48, “Sycophancy constituted a negative social category, founded upon the notion that the Athenian society consisted of insiders and outsiders and that it was critical for Athenians to distinguish sharply between these.”

associating the actions of a meddler or a sycophant as being like those of an outsider, in a way, elites are able to distance what is a democratic institutional function of society that is particularly dangerous to them—the man who dares to stand up and speak truth to power—and discourage it by presenting it as being harmful to the democratic community as a whole.⁹⁹

Another way such language dissuading political meddlesomeness functions is to praise the individual who is ἀπράγμων, or ἥσυχος, or minds their own things, τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πραττεῖν. There are crucial passages in Euripides, Thucydides, and again Aristophanes that—in contrast to the (largely satirized) claims of the πολυπράγμονες—present ἀπραγμοσύνη instead as the political value that is to be promoted and esteemed amongst the citizenry. In particular, praise of the peasant farmer as the ideal type of democratic citizen mirrors the attitude towards urban politics and regular political participation which accords with the critiques of the πολυπράγμων laid out above.¹⁰⁰

Thucydides states that at the start of the Peloponnesian War, the majority of the citizens in Athens and Attica were still living in the countryside, and were forced to enter the walls of the city when the Peloponnesians invaded Attica.¹⁰¹ The majority of these would have been *autorgoi*, a term meaning “those who work their own land.”¹⁰² These

⁹⁹ Osborne (1990): 94-95 argues that despite the rhetoric that surrounded the sycophant, the volunteer prosecutor who acted in a vexatious way was crucial for the functioning of the democracy. I am not yet engaging that claim here, but I will seek to do so later on in this work.

¹⁰⁰ A second theme, which I will not touch on here, but return to when discussing πολυπραγμοσύνη in Plato’s writing, is the development of the figure of the contemplative or philosophic ἀπράγμων, and the critiques and praises of their behavior in Plato, Euripides, and the court orators.

¹⁰¹ Thuc. 2.16.1.

¹⁰² Carter (1986): 77.

autorgoi would have had little leisure and little capital, and therefore, little time or economic incentive to come into the city regularly.¹⁰³ These *autorgoi* were often presented, in idealized and dramatic form, in the theatrical plays of Athens' festivals. Aristophanes' pro-peace plays featured protagonists that are (or were originally) rural residents, and mostly *autorgoi*.¹⁰⁴ Many of them, as has been mentioned above, are the enemies of the sycophants and meddlers when in the city, or when such urban characters intrude into the countryside. In Aristophanes' *Peace*, Tyrgaeus announces himself as a rural demesman, a vinedresser, and neither a sycophant nor a lover of (urban) affairs (ἐραστής πραγμάτων, Ar. *Pax* 190). In the *Knights*, the Sausage-Seller identifies the greatest desires of the character *Demos* to be to return to his lands in the country, to enjoy his country ways (Ar. *Eq.* 805). The country is associated with quietude and peace, while the city life is associated with the law courts, with business, and with politics. It is for that reason that two *autorgoi* protagonists of the *Birds* leave Athens; they declare themselves to be looking for "a quiet and peaceful place" (τόπον ἀπράγμονα, Ar. *Av.* 44).

In terms of thinking proscriptively about political values, the rural protagonists of Aristophanes make for an important contrast to the urban sycophants, πολυπράγμονες, who also have the associations of poverty, and low-class status, at least in comparison to the χρηστοί who served as political leaders. The fact that these individuals are largely unable to participate regularly in politics is actually praised by writers like Euripides, who praises both the character and the retiring nature of the *autorgoi*. Like Aristophanes, his

¹⁰³ Carter (1986): 81. In some cases the distance from one's deme to the city center would have been a day's walk.

¹⁰⁴ Dikaeopolis in *Acharnians*, Strepsiades in *Clouds*, Peisthetairos and Euelpides in *Birds* are *autorgoi*, to name a few.

depictions are idealized and are probably not meant to be explicitly political, yet they still offer a different sense of proscriptive values of political behavior.¹⁰⁵ Euripides introduces the eponymously named *Autourgos* as a character in the *Electra*, where he is introduced as the husband of Electra, who has been forced to marry a peasant farmer by her mother and mother's lover, Aegisthus. However, this farmer has respected his wife and preserved her virginity, ashamed to violate her (ὕβριζειν) since he is "not worthy of the daughter of a wealthy man" (οὐ κατάξιος γεγώς ὀλβίων ἀνδρῶν τέκνα, Eur. *El.* 45). Carter argues that the figure of the *autorgos* in the *Electra* displays a "sturdy independence, yet knows his place; he is in a word, respectable, and it is this which endears him to the oligarchic and fourth-century theorists."¹⁰⁶ Carter also notes that the terms of nobility and restraint used to describe the peasant farmer, such as *gennaios*, *aristos*, *eugenes*, smack of the self-praises of the aristocracy.¹⁰⁷

In the *Suppliant Women*, Euripides' Athenian king Theseus specifically singles out the class in between the poor and the rich as being the "class which saves the city by protecting the order that the city ordains" (μέσῳ σώζει πόλεις κόσμον φυλάσσοις ὄντιν' ἄν τάξει πόλις, Eur. *Supp.* 245-6). When a hostile Theban herald enters the city, he denigrates the Athenian regime for being one in which the *demos* rules, and identifies that *demos* which Theseus talks about as the body of poor farmers, saying that they are incapable of participating in politics, because they don't have the time to turn from their

¹⁰⁵ Dover (1974): 17 argues that despite the fact that tragedy contains "fictitious people in fictitious situations," one should still consider that "the moral sentiments which they utter deserve to be taken seriously as the sentiments which some Athenians could accept in some circumstances."

¹⁰⁶ Carter (1986): 91.

¹⁰⁷ On this see also Rosenbloom (2004): 56.

work to deal with common things, the politics of the city (Eur. *Supp.* 421-22). Yet, in the end it is this very quality that Euripides seems to praise about the politics of the *autorgoi*. In the *Orestes*, Euripides praises the farmer who speaks up in the assembly. This farmer is “not often seen in the marketplace and in the town,” but he is, much like in the *Suppliants*, the savior of the city, an individual who is beyond reproach (Eur. *Or.* 929-933). In other fragments, such as the ἄγων λόγος in Euripides’ *Antiope*, this concept is echoed yet again, where the quiet man is praised as both safest and best citizen for the city (ἤσυχος φίλοισι τ’ ἀσφαλῆς φίλος πόλει τ’ ἄριστος, Eur. Fr. 194). Carter’s summation of Euripides’ idealized peasant citizen—poor, living far from the city, rarely at the town and at the assembly, contrasted with the demagogue, and praised in similar terms to the χρηστοί—leads to an interesting result: “It would seem that Euripides’ hero is a good citizen not because he is always busy and zealous in his city’s affairs” (much as I would suggest, the πολυπράγμων is) but for the opposite reason, “because he is in fact unable to come to the assembly very often.”¹⁰⁸ In this case, the ideal citizen is one who does not exercise his democratic rights, or only does so in a very limited and moderate way.¹⁰⁹ In this way, the praise of the ἀπράγμων peasant in this context encourages political deference and a limited engagement with civic institutions of the city.

The closest that we come to seeing a depiction of outright praise of a “polypragmatic” type of democratic citizenship in the literature of the fifth century is Thucydides’ Pericles’ strong critique of the ἀπράγμων in the Funeral Oration in Book II,

¹⁰⁸ Carter (1986): 92.

¹⁰⁹ Euripides perhaps gives an inclination of what negative political participation is in Fragment 200, from the *Antiope*, when Antiphon praises the wisdom of one wise counsel over the crassness of the mob (σὺν ὄχλῳ δ’ ἀμαθία πλεῖστον κακόν, Eur. Fr. 200).

which rounds out the third category of my typology. In the speech (as any of the speeches, which, as one should remember, are not necessarily historical documents, but what Thucydides felt what ought be demanded in a given situation),¹¹⁰ the man he saw as the democratic leader *par excellence* both honors the war dead as well as praises the democratic constitution.¹¹¹ One might read the speech, therefore, not necessarily as praising what Thucydides saw as praiseworthy, but what a democrat speaking to democrats might wish to praise. Midway through the speech Pericles states his goal to highlight the unique nature of the Athenian constitution in comparison to its neighbors (Thuc. 2.37.1). He touches on participation in politics, arguing that in Athens individuals are not barred from the ability to gain honors because they belong to a given class, and poverty is not to prevent someone from public service if they wish to do the state a service (ἔχων δέ τι ἀγαθὸν δρᾶσαι τὴν πόλιν, ἀξιώματος ἀφανεία κεκώλυται, Thuc. 2.37.1). Participation and contribution, in the words of a paradigmatic democrat, are open to all. Pericles goes farther when he claims that in Athens, in comparison to other *poleis*, Athens regards those who not are taking part in (μετέχοντα) the affairs of the city or public duties (τὰ πολιτικά) are not only considered

¹¹⁰ Thuc. 1.22, “Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said” (trans Smith); Hornblower (1991): 60 sees Thucydides’ claim to have written what was objectively appropriate (in his own mind) for the situation to be inconsistent with his subsequent claim to “οὐδ’ ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει”, “reconstruct events according to ideas of my own.” Thuc. 2.65 “In short, what was nominally a democracy became in his hands government by the first citizen”, “ἐγένετο τε λόγῳ μὲν δημοκρατία, ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή.”

¹¹¹ On Pericles’ stated praise of Athens’ democratic constitution see Thuc. 2.36: “But what was the road by which we reached our position, by what was the road under which our greatness grew?”

“ἀπράγμονα” but also useless (ἄχρεϊον, Thuc. 2.40.1). Thucydides’ Pericles, having not only cast a broad net for whom can be useful to the state—anyone respective of class or wealth—then proceeds to argue that it is indeed their role to be un-ἀπράγμων. πολυπραγμοσύνη is not mentioned, but it is clear that Pericles is not equating these political roles with intervention in others’ personal lives in that negative sense. He had earlier claimed that Athenians do not exercise a “jealous surveillance over each other” in their personal lives (Thuc. 2.37.2).

It would seem that the characteristics that Pericles praises about Athens are somewhat akin—if not presented as such a negative light—to the characteristics of the πολυπράγμων. Regular political participation and engagement is praised, as also is the spectacle of “daring and deliberation,” as well as a willingness to brave toils (τῶν κινδύνων) on behalf of their country (Thuc. 2.40.3). The speech of the Corinthians (Thuc. 1.70) contextualizes these same characteristics in a more critical light, one that sounds suspiciously like πολυπραγμοσύνη. The Corinthians detail the national character of Athens to the Spartans. The Athenians are innovative and revolutionary (νεωτεροποιός) and are quick to plan and act on such plans (1.70.2). They are bold and adventurous, and run risks and dangers optimistically (κινδυνευταὶ καὶ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς εὐέλπιδες, Thuc. 1.70.3). The Athenians are constantly active, toiling, and troubling, both in their domestic lives and their foreign policy, for themselves and for their country, and for them, having no leisure (ἀσχολίαν) is less of a misfortune than the peace of a quiet life (ἡσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα). Such a characterization of the domestic character of the Athenians is not limited to mouths of

the hostile critics of Athens in Thucydides.¹¹² This characterization of the Athenian *polis* on the whole as being busy, optimistic, and active finds common currency in popular discourse as well. Similar language is found again in Aristophanes, this time in *Birds*.¹¹³

This play opens with the two main characters leaving Athens in order to find a peaceful place (τόπον ἀπράγμονα, Ar. Av. 45), something therefore that Athens is not. The business that they seek to leave is similar to Aristophanes' previous depictions of πολυπραγμοσύνη with much blame going on the law courts; they are a pair of anti-jurors, coming from a land that has few juro-phobes (105-110).¹¹⁴ Later on, when describing the city in the clouds founded by the birds at the instigation of Peisetairos, one of the protagonists, one of the things the city is specifically cited for is embodying is “gentle peace” (ἀγανόφρονος Ἡσυχίας). Dunbar's commentary on this passage specifically highlights the Pindaric tinge of such a passage, noting that here, as in Pindar, the concept of Athens as a busy, unquiet, rambunctious *polis* is used in Aristophanes and Thucydides to contrast with the “ideals of Dorian cities.”¹¹⁵ While the protagonists at the start seem to be seeking an idealized type of city such as the Dorian type, other characteristics emerge in

¹¹² Hornblower (1991): 114 argues that the Corinthian speech, compared to many of the speeches, may actually represent what Thucydides believed was the main difference between the Athenian and Spartan characters—ambitious versus cautious—as it essentially expands upon the statements that he makes at 8.96 in his own voice blaming Spartan cautiousness for their inability to end the war after attacking Euboea during the oligarchy of the Four-Hundred.

¹¹³ Hornblower (1991): 115 mentions that *Birds* was first produced in 414, midway through the war. It might be hard to draw a line of direct influence between Aristophanes' work and Thucydides' *History*, but such a correlation does provide evidence of an existing contemporary discourse around depictions of the character of Athens and the Athenians as a whole.

¹¹⁴ Dunbar (1995): 169: ἀπηλιαστής: One who is ἀπ-Ἡλιαία, or one who keeps away from the main law-court of Athens.

¹¹⁵ Dunbar (1995): 649.

their characters that are more reminiscent of the democratic *polis* that they are leaving behind.

The two heroes are named Peisetairos and Euepides, names that are both words for “comrade-persuader” (πείθω-ἐταῖρος) and “hopeful or optimistic” (literally, good hope, εὐ-ἐλπίς). Euepides puts in mind the optimism ascribed to the Athenians by the Corinthians (Thuc. 1.70.3) while on the other hand, Peisetairos’s ability to be a comrade-persuader, as Leigh puts it, is better suited to the active citizen in the courtroom or the assembly than to the ἀπράγμων.¹¹⁶ Finally, upon meeting the chorus of birds, Peisetairos tells them that they are unlearned (ἀμαθής) and un-curious (κοῦ πολυπράγμων, Ar. Or. 469), at least compared to their Athenian guests, who subsequently persuade the birds into engaging in the utopian mission of building a city in the clouds. Used positively here on Peisetairos’ behalf, the concept of the πολυπράγμων as intelligent does have further implications for democratic citizenship—in modern democracies, being informed is oft described as crucial to participation. In the ancient discourse, Aristophanes’ heroes had bashed the well-informed πολυπράγμονες as being informers.¹¹⁷ One of the characteristics hinted at here is of the πολυπράγμων as an individual interested in gathering and using information. Despite attempting to leave the polypragmatic city of Athens, the protagonists still demonstrate attitudes towards πολυπραγμοσύνη that are particularly Athenian. Harding puts it well in claiming that Peisetairos and Euepides will never find their τόπον ἀπράγμονα, “for no

¹¹⁶ Leigh (2013): 46.

¹¹⁷ The fragments of Pherecrates (193 Loeb) and Eupolis (238 Loeb) had both also connected being a πολυπράγμων to intelligence and cleverness; Dunbar (1995): 325 notes that “the term is now being used in a clearly favorable sense, appropriate to Peis., who is now actively interfering in the life of the birds. A restless, interfering man would be likely to keep himself well informed on everything including Aesop’s stories.”

sooner will they find it than their true nature will assert itself and they will take over the universe.”¹¹⁸ Leigh too sees the *Birds* as essentially being “a play about *polypragmosyne* and the Athenian spirit,” and it is well worth noting that the depictions of the Athenians in Thucydides, as individuals and as a *polis* as a whole, draw on larger (and dubiously negative) conceptions of πολυπραγμοσύνη.

While Thucydides’ Pericles is outwardly praising of this kind of national character—something Aristophanes’ plays and Pericles’ rhetoric seem to attach specifically to Athens’ democratic institutions—it is not clear that Thucydides the writer saw those characteristics as positive. In fact, as Ehrenberg states in his study of the term πολυπραγμοσύνη as it becomes applied to Athenian foreign policy (and as was noted by the Corinthians), in Thucydides, “πολυπραγμοσύνη was the psychological basis for Athenian imperialism.”¹¹⁹ The Athenian speakers in Sicily proudly describe their policy to the Camarinaeans, whom they are trying to win over to their side, as “our interfering character” (πολυπραγμοσύνης, Thuc. 6.87.3). Alcibiades, in pressing for the Sicilian Expedition, denounces Nicias’s opposition as ἀπραγμοσύνη, and argues that a city not inactive by nature (πόλιν μὴ ἀπράγμονα) could ruin itself by adopting a policy of ἀπραγμοσύνη (Thuc. 6.18.6). Diodotus, arguing against Cleon for punishing the Mytilenean revolt, argues that hope (ἐλπίς) along with desire (ἔρωσ) is what does damage (βλάπτουσι) to ventures or plans. Such a description of Athenian foreign policy puts in mind the name of Aristophanes’ polypragmatic protagonist, Euelpides. Ehrenberg notes that one of the characteristics leading Athens into the Sicilian Expedition, one of Athens’ greatest disasters, was

¹¹⁸ Harding (1981): 41.

¹¹⁹ Ehrenberg (1947): 47.

unreasonable optimism.¹²⁰ Subsequent scholarship has largely made the connection of Thucydides' depiction of the domestic democratic πολυπραγμοσύνη as leading to an interventionist, meddling, and imperialist foreign policy.¹²¹

Therefore, the question to be asked is, in comparison to the speech he puts in Pericles' mouth, does Thucydides approve of πολυπραγμοσύνη, at home or abroad? His portrayal of the Athenians as being overambitious and optimistic in their views of the Sicilian Expedition seems to indicate that he believes such national characteristics permitted to their extreme to have led to disaster. Politically, the Old Oligarch described the abuse of the allies by the Athenian democracy as a result of the democratic rabble (δημοτικοῖς) having sway in politics (Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.15). Thucydides, less blunt than the Old Oligarch, seems to view Athenian imperialism as stemming more from a democratically related πολυπραγμοσύνη rather than simply bold money-grubbing against the allies. However, he offers his own political preferences when he praises the moderate Oligarchy of 5,000 that followed more severe one that orchestrated the coup of 411. Thucydides notes that such a time was when the Athenians seemed to be best administering the state (εὖ πολιτεύσαντες, Thuc. 8.97.2). It then could be argued that the glowing praise that Thucydides puts into Pericles' mouth about the character of a democratic city, and especially its attitude towards action, business, optimism, and mass political participation

¹²⁰ Ehrenberg (1947): 51, cf. Thucydides 6.24, who describes the “ἐπιθυμία,” desire of the majority, and the lack of doubt in the success of the expedition.

¹²¹ Ehrenberg (1947): 53: “The ἀπράγμων is anti-democratic, the πολυπράγμων is a democrat. This division can be traced behind Thucydides' application of the terms to foreign policy;” Harding (1981): 44 is perhaps the outlier in that he equates πολυπραγμοσύνη with all types of Athenian imperial policies, and moderately argues that support for such a policy was broad and widespread, not restricted to a radical democratic faction or opposed by a radical oligarchic one.

must be read through the perspective of a writer that seems at other times to be very wary of those characteristics. Thus, what appears to be an example of democratic language extolling a polypragmatic democracy becomes far more suspect given the rest of Thucydides' narrative.

In much of the literature of the fifth century in Athens, the terms *πολυπράγμων* and *ἀπράγμων* were part of a contested discourse about political engagement, citizenship duties, and even foreign policy and the character of a city. Previously, I had laid out four categories of use for these terms and the family of synonyms and antonyms that go with them, and examined some of the paradigmatic ways that these terms are treated in surviving literature. In the first category—that of criticism of the *πολυπράγμων*—business, nosiness, and bad character are used to tar those who are exercising certain democratic rights, especially those of *ho boulomenos*. However, what critics can decry as meddling, a positive user of such terms can claim that they are acting in the interest of the city, and name a necessity (the lack of a state prosecutor) and a patriotic compulsion. On the other hand, the praise of the idealized rural, rustic, and retired *ἀπράγμων* who appears in the plays of Euripides and Aristophanes as the ideal democratic citizen has an irony to it. The individual who is praised as being best for the state is the one who is least likely to participate often in its formal political institutions. Implicit criticism is found again in these sources of those who actively seek to spend their time engaging in civic business—they are equated to demagogues or busybodies, and are detrimental for the state.

On the one hand, Thucydides' Pericles, in his castigation of the *ἀπράγμων*, might appear in his Funeral Oration to give the most coherent explanation of democratic rights and democratic participation, and their relation to the busy, active, and optimistic

democratic character. Yet, much of Thucydides' narrative becomes a strong criticism of such πολυπραγμοσύνη as manifested in Athens' relationship with other nations in the field of foreign affairs. It is the goal of this study in subsequent chapters to investigate this missing part of the quartet—the praise of the πολυπράγμων. I will seek to use the fourth century sources—which provide us a good deal more information about the ways that a regular Athenian interacted with his fellow citizens and political institutions on a day-to-day basis—to tease out a conception of the busy, active, democratic citizen during what was a largely stable and well-documented time for democratic institutions.

Unlike much of the literature of the fifth and fourth century, which is largely written for elite/elite audiences, such as the Old Oligarch, Thucydides, and the philosophic writers like Plato, the speeches of the Athenian orators before the popular assemblies and before the courts plausibly offer a view into how the Athenian *demos*, and not just elite commentators, considered itself and its democracy.¹²² I therefore will seek to use popular oratory to engage with broadly held and popular views of πολυπραγμοσύνη. After doing this, I will consider πολυπραγμοσύνη as it is presented in Plato. As one of the most sophisticated critics of Athenian democracy, Plato makes πολυπραγμοσύνη central to his conception of justice and the political critiques offered in the *Republic*. Writers like Plato, Aristophanes, the Old Oligarch, and others saw πολυπραγμοσύνη and meddlesome or bothersome ways of exercising democratic citizenship as being present enough in their own contemporary context to make it the point of sustained criticisms, many of which

¹²² Ober (1989): 43. “It would be reductionist to suppose that every comment in an oration derives immediately from popular ideology, but we may suppose that skilled and experienced speakers would avoid making comments that they thought were likely to contradict deeply held popular convictions.”

have been treated in this second chapter. This implies, then, that democratic citizenship was something that, at least by the late fifth century, did legitimately encourage a sense of activity and involvement (or over-involvement) for regular, non-elite citizens. The voices of the critics that we have access to—elite writers—mostly seem to characterize such behavior as meddlesome, analogous to pre-existing examples of social disruption and admonitions to “stay in one’s place.” However, it is largely the voices and experiences of such citizens that we lack in the historical record of the fifth century in classical Athens in which I am interested. While Aristophanes lays the dikasts of Athens out for brutal satire in his plays, the archaeological record on the other hand provides evidence that many Athenians took their jury-allotment tokens with them to their graves.¹²³ It is the views and impact of the role of such citizens that I will continue exploring in subsequent chapters of this project.

¹²³ Hansen (1999): 7.

Chapter Three

From Rhetoric to the *Republic*: Polypragmosune in the Orators and Plato

In the previous chapters I sought to demonstrate that in much of Athenian literature of the fifth century B.C., the use of the term πολυπραγμοσύνη to describe and criticize the busy, active, prying, optimistic, and meddling Athenian citizens as individuals and a *polis* as a whole more often than not came laden with socio-political baggage. In the works of elite writers, criticism of πολυπραγμοσύνη and praise of ἀπραγμοσύνη involve criticism of their current democratic status quo, and (with praises of ἀπραγμοσύνη in particular) point Athens towards a more measured and less directly participatory gradient of democracy, particularly in regards to the legal system and the assembly.

I had also set out a schematic for considering uses of πολυπραγμοσύνη and related terms in fifth-century literature: (1) criticism of πολυπραγμοσύνη or the πολυπράγμων, (2) praise of ἀπραγμοσύνη or the ἀπράγμων, (3) criticism of the ἀπράγμων, and (4) praise of the πολυπράγμων. I found the criticism of the first two categories coming from mixed sources such as the playwrights (reformist criticism internal to the democracy in the form of “warnings and admonitions,” also called “immanent critics,” by Ober)¹²⁴, and rejectionist critics, such as the Old Oligarch, whose disapproval of Athens’ πολυπραγμοσύνη-laden character are indications of broader dissatisfaction with the political regime as a whole. In the fifth century, Thucydides’ work provides evidence of the third category, praising characteristics that are in other negatively associated with πολυπραγμοσύνη, and offering

¹²⁴ For admonitory critics, see Ober (1998): 126. For immanent critics see Ober (1998): 48.

on the ἀπράγμων through the mouth of his paradigmatic democrat, Pericles, associating these characteristics and a defense of them, with the democratic conditions of the late fifth century. However, Thucydides' own narrative seems to make it clear that Pericles' praise is not his own. Much of his narrative plays out Athens' πολυπραγμοσύνη as leading to disastrous consequences in political and military leadership—Thucydides himself endorses a more limited form of government near the end of his work, the Five Thousand, based on restricted wealth qualifications (Thuc. 8.98).

One might be tempted to see an explicit political axis relating to these two terms emerging. Praise of the πολυπράγμων might be said to come from more democratic sources, and criticism of the ἀπράγμων comes from the more aristocratic examples of the fifth-century writers. Also, as the words of Thucydides' Pericles might lead one to believe, it is to democratic discourse that one must turn if they are to complete the fourth category, and find praise of the πολυπράγμων and his behaviors in a democratic context. While some of Athens' citizens may have been functionally literate,¹²⁵ it would be hard to look to written literature for an unequivocal democratic response to such elite penned criticism—the writing of literature and the collection of books was largely an upper-class activity, with minor middle-class participation.¹²⁶ Ober suggests that much of Athenian popular ideology was formulated by public speech acts in fora such as the Assembly and the lawcourts. In his view, the “general understanding held by the citizenry regarding the nature of society was the same understanding employed by all decision-making bodies in

¹²⁵ Morgan (1999): 59-60.

¹²⁶ Allen (2010): 5, 162-163.

formulating government policy for deployment in the real world.”¹²⁷ Therefore, it is to the literature with mass audiences, such as symbouletic and dicanic speeches, that the scholar of popular ideology should turn. Canevaro too notes that in Athens, “popular culture seems to live rather inside the formal institutions of the state, fostered and validated by them.”¹²⁸

While the speakers of public addresses in the assembly, courts, or council that we find extant were frequently members of the wealthy elite (although not always, as Lysias’s *On the Pension* suggests), the majority of those sitting on the assembly, courts, and council were not of elite status.¹²⁹ Ober suggests therefore that this dynamic produces a complex relationship in reading the values of elites and masses into court oratory. In his view, it is important to see rhetorical appeals in assembly, council, and court speeches as calculated to appeal to the opinions, norms, beliefs, and prejudices of their audiences.¹³⁰ He therefore sees court oratory in particular as a key way that the real and obvious inequalities of wealth and status between Athenian elites and the majority of the population were mediated in light of a prevalent egalitarian ideology and popular control of decision-

¹²⁷ Ober (1998): 34.

¹²⁸ Canevaro (2016), forthcoming.

¹²⁹ On the notion that logography services were not common for non-wealthy elite see Canevaro (2016). Contrast Ober (1989): 118: “Given that being a politician in fourth-century Athens was a full-time affair, being a member of the leisure class was virtually a prerequisite.” On overall demographics see Hansen (1999): 127 “There is, therefore, no good ground to postulate any marked difference between the Assembly and the courts in this regard; indeed the crush to secure the daily payment indicates that the poorer group of citizens were the majority in both sorts of meeting, as they undoubtedly were in the population as a whole.

¹³⁰ Ober (1989): 43: “As Aristotle clearly recognized, an orator who wishes to persuade a mass audience must accommodate himself to the ethos—the ideology—of his audience.”

making political bodies.¹³¹ Yet, aside from the obvious doubts about questions of fact, court documents cannot simply be used as an easy mirror of reality, particularly for popular sentiments. Mass audiences and elite litigants may have differing expectations and standards for respective elite and non-elite behavior. Elite values and standards of behavior may not be able to contradict popular ideology, but they can significantly differ from the standards espoused by and for non-elite Athenians.¹³²

I spend time on this qualification because the context in which a speaker decries the πολυπραγμοσύνη of their accuser or accusers in general and promotes their own ἀπραγμοσύνη needs to be considered in order to determine whether such criticism or praise refers to ordinary citizen behavior, or sets differing standards to which elites are held to rather than their non-elite judges in the courts. Part of what I am seeking to understand is whether the behaviors (both positively and negatively associated with πολυπραγμοσύνη and its certain brand of civic behavior) were considered by the common Athenian at the time to be, first, associated with a democratic form of government, and second, played an important role (positive or negative) to the democracy's functioning.¹³³

¹³¹ Ober (1989): 45: "Public rhetoric not only helps us to define Athenian public ideology, it was instrumental in the regulation of mass-elite relations for the Athenians themselves.

¹³² Ober (1989): 44: "...[W]e may suppose that skilled and experienced speakers would avoid making comments that they thought were likely to contradict deeply held popular convictions." Ober (1989): 335: "The orator had to be simultaneously of the elite and of the mass, and he was expected to prove his membership in both on a regular basis."

¹³³ Even if they were not *considered* by an Athenian at the time to be important to democracy's function, I do not believe that such a fact would invalidate my interest in πολυπραγμοσύνη—it is entirely possible that the ancient Athenians could not have conceived of hyperactivity, busyness, and inquisitiveness as being political virtues as was negatively construed in their discourse—but such behaviors may have been important to their society's functioning nevertheless.

Yet, elite citizens and non-elites often drove forward different parts of Athens' democratic machinery, and while an elite litigant may promote their dedication to actively staying out of politics and being above the fray of, say, the *boule*, or assembly, as does the speaker in Lysias's *On the Property of Aristophanes* (Lys. 19.55), this may reflect attitudes that he is expected to hew to as a member of a wealthy family. On the other hand, the regular assembly- or council-goer might not be proud to abnegate something they consider to be a right, duty, or simply a common behavior as a citizen of the polis.

Given the previous association of πολυπραγμοσύνη with democracy, one might assume that discussions of πολυπραγμοσύνη would, in contrast to elite/elite literature, entail the positive identification of certain behaviors and characteristics embodied by the πολυπράγμων, such as vigorous information gathering and inquisitiveness (Ar. Or. 469), enthusiastic activity and action in domestic and foreign affairs (Thuc. 6.18.6-7), and innovation and adventurousness (Thuc. 1.70.2). One might expect to find in such discourse the language of vigorous participation in citizen obligations, such as the lawcourts and the assembly, as might befit a type of citizen that is expected to be busy, active in many things, and spending time around the city's political institutions and the marketplace (Ar. Plut 907-909). If elite critics attempt to draw lines (as represented by the formulation of (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν) proscribing an active inquisitiveness into private *and* public lives, or limit spheres of political behavior considered to be particularly democratic, one might expect to find a defense of such behavior in popular rhetoric. Yet, what one discovers at first blush is that like in elite-penned literature, it appears that it is decidedly a negative thing to call someone a πολυπράγμων. Yet, numerous references to the term and its synonyms and antonyms betray one of the weaknesses of court oratory for historical factuality—but still

make it useful for this study. As Leigh notes, πολυπραγμοσύνη (and court rhetoric in general) is construed subjectively—while a defendant in court can tar their political adversary with negatively tinged characteristics such as being a πολυπράγμων, an accuser in court can equally claim to be a good citizen carrying out their duties, or an engaged community member seeking information and political discussion in the open spaces of the city.¹³⁴

In the court orations, calling someone a πολυπράγμων or other synonyms like a φιλοπράγμων (a lover of πράγματα) or a περίεργος (meddler, with an emphasis on officiousness) is lumped in with other popular insults designed to present their adversary as being a danger and outsider to the community in their personal and civic behavior, such as sycophancy and quarrelsomeness. Thus Aeschines calls his political nemesis Demosthenes both a “meddler and a sycophant” (περίεργος καὶ συκοφάντης, Aeschin. *In Ctes.* 172-173) in the same breath in which he implies that Demosthenes’ mother was a foreigner (and therefore of suspect citizenship), and that he had squandered his own inheritance. On the other hand, Demosthenes, at the same trial, justifying his own career as a public speaker, obviously puts it in a different light, saying that his skills in speaking have always been brought forward for “the common good” (τοῖς κοινοῖς, Dem. *De cor.* 277). That is, he works for the public’s concerns and the public’s interest, rather than the public’s loss, and his own interest. What Demosthenes can tout as a career of honorable prosecutions in the public’s interest, Aeschines can call meddlesome self-aggrandizement.

¹³⁴ Leigh (2013): 16: “These are always profoundly subjective terms: nobody ever saw a *polypragmon* or *periergos* on the streets of Athens, only someone he or others held to be such.”

Other court speakers take pains to defend themselves from claims of πολυπραγμοσύνη. The defendant in Lysias' *On the Pension* argues that he has never been politically active before—he has to contend with the claim that he is “a busybody or quarrel seeker” (ἀλλ’ ὅτι πολυπράγμων εἰμὶ καὶ θρασὺς καὶ φιλαπεχθήμων; Lys. 24.24). Lycurgus claims that it is unfair that those who bring cases to court or speak in the assembly can be considered “not as patriotic but as meddling” (οὐ φιλόπολιν ἀλλὰ φιλοπράγμονα δοκεῖν εἶναι, Lycurg. *Leoc.* 3). Isocrates' *Antidosis* states, perhaps metaphorically, that the “πολυπράγμονας” are one and the same with the “wrongdoers and sycophants” that the city punishes (ἀδικοῦντας καὶ τοὺς συκοφαντοῦντας, Isoc. 15.237).¹³⁵ In another speech of Lysias, an old woman is reluctant to tell the defendant about a case of adultery that is being committed in his own house for fear of being named as a meddler (πολυπραγμοσύνη προσεληλυθέναι με νόμιζε πρὸς σέ, Lys. 1.15-16). The litigant in Lysias's *On the Property of Aristophanes* praises his father for having naturally minded his own business, while in contrast critiques his deceased and destitute creditor Aristophanes for bankrupting himself by focusing on both public and private activities (Lys. 19.18).

As these examples show, calling someone a πολυπράγμων is not simply part of elite discourse. In legal discourse the term was indeed used along with other terms of social disapproval, often as a modifier to a worse term, the sycophant, designed to present

¹³⁵ Isocrates' *Antidosis*, it should be noted, does not conform to all the standards I had discussed for the use of popular rhetoric earlier. As Leigh (2013): 27 notes, it is a speech composed for a fictional trial, which however still retains characteristics of the typical courtroom exercise speech, down to the “sundry references to the dripping of a non-existent water clock.”

adversaries as dangerous social outsiders.¹³⁶ In that way, the use of it might assume that certain values associated with the *πολυπράγμων*, such as inquisitiveness, busyness, activity, and action are not ones that are viewed as positive amongst the Athenian populace as a whole. Adkins, believing that in the late fifth-century Athens was “still to a surprising extent in sentiment and values a collection of virtually autonomous households” sees such uses of language as revealing a “general pre-existing dislike of ‘meddling’ that rendered *polupragmosune* so useful a word of abuse in Athenian politics.”¹³⁷ As Millett notes, archaeologically and textually, there does seem to be strong attitudes towards a division between private life and public life: “private space is *oikos* space,” as opposed to “*polis* space.” Textual references to doorkeepers, locked homes, and a reluctance to step over the threshold of another without invitation¹³⁸ reflect preoccupations with personal privacy not surprising to us in the modern age.¹³⁹ Christ, approaching the topic of popular values from a different angle, argues that “helping behavior” between Athenian citizens (particularly in disputes involving strangers and bystanders) who were neither friends nor family was in fact minimized by the fear of being considered “intrusive and meddling.”¹⁴⁰ However, I argue that this is not simply a cultural onus against prying or busy behavior—it is also an outgrowth of the democratic nature of Athens’ society. Athens was a *polis* where every

¹³⁶ Christ (1998): 51: “The sycophant bustles about (*perieimi*) the city in pursuit of victims and never desists from his sycophantic activity; he is a meddling troublemaker (*polupragmōn*) and busybody (*periergos*); he disturbs (*tarattō*), confuses (*kukaō*) and shakes down (*seiō*)—that is, blackmails—his victims...”

¹³⁷ Adkins (1976): 304.

¹³⁸ Millett (1998): 207.

¹³⁹ Millett (1998): 207 also cites Nevett (1995) who argues that architecturally, the design of homes in Athens restricted sight lines from the streets into the house.

¹⁴⁰ Christ (2010): 285.

citizen had the right—and was essentially individually deputized, in contrast to a modern governmental prosecutorial arm—to carry out the law (as well as seek a lawsuit against any other Athenian, regardless of social status and class) as ὁ βουλόμενος.¹⁴¹ Moreover, intervening in other individuals' legal troubles might not only be seen as a negative thing, but potentially dangerous for the intervening party, who might run the risk of exacerbating or being included in an ongoing conflict.¹⁴² While Theophrastus's *Characters* is certainly not a piece of popular rhetoric, it does corroborate the claim in speeches that the περίεργος is someone who will attempt to separate combatants in a fight even if he does not know them.¹⁴³

One side of the πολυπράγμων that appears to come in for criticism in both elite/elite and elite/non-elite discourse is the inability to distinguish what one's own things, τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν are. The type of πολυπραγμοσύνη described in the courtroom reflects a fear that might have had legitimate purchase in Athens—the positive side of embracing one's citizen duties as a prosecutor can also mean investigation, intervention, and judgment on the private lives of other individuals. Regardless of whether this aspect of Athenian democracy was beneficial to the flourishing of the state or adherence to the laws, a defendant in court would naturally feel (and seek to present such activity) as socially and

¹⁴¹ Hansen (1999): 72: “‘He of the Athenians who wishes from amongst those who may,’ frequently mentioned as the originator of laws, decrees, and public prosecutions, was arguably the real protagonist of the Athenian democracy.”

¹⁴² Christ (2010): 274: “Bystanders in Athens, moreover, typically did not know the context of violence involving strangers, including whether the participants had a history of violent relations of which this was just one more episode.”

¹⁴³ The genre and purpose of the *Characters* is an open question. Theophrastus was a pupil of Aristotle, but rather than any work of moral philosophy like his teacher's *Ethics* it should be according to Ussher (1993): 23 taken instead as a literary hand-book, a guide to comic characterization.

morally onerous. Indeed, as Thucydides' Pericles had noted in the Funeral Oration, one of the outstanding Athenian characteristics is that they are not suspicious of each other in their private lives (Thuc. 2.37). This is a πολυπραγμοσύνη that lacks the kind of anti-urban (as the city center is associated with the agora, courts, and assembly) sentiment and questioning of broader democratic values that could be found in some of the fifth-century literature, and is more concerned with how certain Athenians gather information about and interact with each other on a daily basis. In the court orations, πολυπραγμονεῖν is representative of a subset of individual citizens. Meddlesomeness and busyness are not characteristics that are to be critiqued about the entire democratic *polis* or Athens' constitution as a whole as is presented by Thucydides' Corinthian speech (Thuc. 1.70).

The intellectual trend I had advanced in the first chapter was that of the πολυπράγμων as a kind of overextended democrat—one who infringes on the political space traditionally considered the domain of the political elite and celebrates what Thucydides' Pericles would call “the freedom that Athenians maintain in their government” (ἐλευθέρως δὲ τὰ τε πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν πολιτεύομεν, Thuc. 2.37). Such a trend can still be seen in these orations, but in an inverted way. Whereas in the fifth century, aristocratic and oligarchic writers were praising the ἀπραγμοσύνη of the rural peasant with little time for politics, in the fourth-century orations, it becomes a common *topos* in oratory for a wealthy defendant to highlight their own ἀπραγμοσύνη, their own withdrawal from politics.

Lateiner highlights this trend well in his analysis of Lysias's speeches, both those written by the *metic* logographer for mostly wealthy clients (between 402-380), as well as

those delivered on his own behalf.¹⁴⁴ He argues that even when dominant in the fifth century, “the ordinarily political class, the self-styled *khrestoi* (the *kaloι k' agathoi* to which Pericles belonged),” felt a “posture of distaste” towards the institutions of democratic politics.¹⁴⁵ Lateiner shares a view with other scholars that the nature of political leadership shifted in the late-fifth century away from being dominated by an established elite of wealth and birth, largely through family ties, largesse, and military success, keeping an aloof or a measured distance from the democratic organs of the city, such as attacks in the courts and in the assembly.¹⁴⁶ Lateiner notes that Lysias describes his own family as living in Athens in a “democratic fashion” (ὠκοῦμεν δημοκρατούμενοι, Lys. 12.4). What this is revealed to mean, however, is an abstention from lawsuits and wrongdoing against other citizens (Lys. 12.5) as well as paying for liturgies, funding festivals, and living in an orderly and moderate fashion (κοσμίους δ' ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς παρέχοντας, Lys 12.20).¹⁴⁷ However, Lysias is a *metic*, a resident foreigner, and while obliged to fund civic life in the city and able to

¹⁴⁴ Carter (1986): 106-107 presents Lysias’s clients as wealthy. Certainly, those who claim to have funded *choregia* and trierarchies were undoubtedly wealthy, as well as those who paid for speechwriting services. Ober (1989): 113 argues that in private oratory, speakers were most likely part of a wealthy elite, if not an educated elite. On 221-222 he remarks that many speakers who claim to not be of such social status may be employing a dramatic fiction, one fully understood by their audiences. Lateiner (1982): 4-5 adds, “While quick to mention their fulfillment of civic obligations and duties, the logographer’s wealthy clients claim to have avoided, to the best of their ability, the law courts, the assembly, and the council house: that is, Athenian politics *tout court*.”

¹⁴⁵ Lateiner (1982): 4. Pericles himself is perhaps the outlier in this regard. Ober (1989): 88 presents his unique success vis-à-vis his contemporaries due to his embrace of democratic rhetoric and institutions.

¹⁴⁶ Connor (1971): 9-11 on family ties, 19-22 on politics of largesse. Ober (1989): 86: “The Athenian politician of the earlier fifth century appealed to the demos, but he did through the symbols of wealth and birthright that would have been familiar to his sixth-century ancestors.”

¹⁴⁷ Lateiner (1982): 6.

appear in court, he and his family lack any of the directly participatory political rights of Athenian citizens.¹⁴⁸ In Lysias's case, living in a "democratic fashion" has nothing to do with exercising political rights of decision-making.

This is an important passage to highlight, because many of Lysias's other clients, who are, in contrast, wealthy and also fully enfranchised citizens "dissociate themselves as clearly as the *metic* from the lawcourts and from the administration of the state."¹⁴⁹ In Lateiner's reading, the speaker of *On the Property of Aristophanes* claims that he had never been seen in the council and courts (Lys. 19.55) because it was sensible for members of the upper classes following the two oligarchic revolutions to "plead a lack of appearances in the political arena."¹⁵⁰ Lysias's clients appear to make themselves indifferent to either democracy or oligarchy, stressing that they are politically active under neither, but live in an orderly (*κόσμιος*) and modest (*σώφρων*) manner.¹⁵¹ As I mentioned above, it is difficult to attempt to extract values wholesale from such court documents, be they popular or elite ones. However, one does see that during the early fourth century, a time when the democracy has been restored, and popular control of the assembly, courts, and council re-established,¹⁵² it is an acceptable strategy for wealthy defendants disavow any type of *πολυπραγμοσύνη*, and any type of political activity altogether. Regardless of whether such

¹⁴⁸ Hansen (1999): 97.

¹⁴⁹ Lateiner (1982): 7.

¹⁵⁰ Lateiner (1982): 7.

¹⁵¹ Lys. 7.41: "κόσμιον δ' ἑμαυτὸν καὶ ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ καὶ ἐν ὀλιγαρχίᾳ παρασχών"; Lys. 21.19: "διὰ τέλους τὸν πάντα χρόνον κόσμιον εἶναι καὶ σώφρονα"; Lateiner (1982): 8.

¹⁵² *Ath. Pol.* 42.2: "They have made themselves supreme in all fields; they make run everything by the decrees of the assembly and by decisions of the courts in which the people are supreme." Democracy restored and reaffirmed, Harris (2014): 3-4; Ober (1989): 98 claims "The description of the democracy of the fourth century as most fully developed, most extreme, even most "radical" makes a good deal of sense from the point of view of political sociology."

a strategy was viewed favorably or unfavorably by the non-elite jurors and audience, the fact that the defendants—in what is, admittedly, an incredibly slim representation of surviving court literature¹⁵³—so consistently sought to contrast their behavior with their πολυπράγμων accusers and highlight their distance from Athens’ democratic institutions offers a negative critical inference for the existence of such behavior as particularly democratic—spurred on by the popular institutions—and prevalent in Athens.

The “retreat by the socially and economically advantaged class from the world of politics and political maneuvering in the courts”¹⁵⁴ that Lateiner notes, and the aristocratic ethic that emerges from it—wealthy litigants claim to be “κόσμιος” and “σώφρων,” in opposition to civic-minded and active—are particularly important in relation to the works of one of the most famous and lasting critics of Athenian democracy, Plato. As a writer, Plato is in dialogue with and actively critiquing his contemporary political culture in Athens, and it is no surprise that he treats the subject of πολυπραγμοσύνη in a central place in his most famous work, the *Republic*.

Compared to other writers like Herodotus, Thucydides, and even Aristophanes, the scholarly tradition preserves a good amount of biographical detail about Plato, whose writing overlaps with that of Lysias. Plato was born into an aristocratic family around 424/3 B.C., and died in the 340’s. He was the nephew of two politically active aristocrats, Critias and Charmides, who were notorious in later literature, such as Xenophon’s *Hellenica*, for overthrowing the democracy in 404/403 B.C., and putting to death enemies of the new

¹⁵³ Ober (1989): 44 remarks on the paucity of written texts by ordinary Athenians for mass audiences, and argues further that the speeches we have surviving represent about ten percent of the speeches actually delivered.

¹⁵⁴ Lateiner (1982): 11.

regime.¹⁵⁵ He founded a school of philosophy at the Academy gymnasium in Athens, and for a time travelled to Sicily to educate two tyrants of Syracuse. Most famously, he wrote largely in the dialogue form, and was an admirer and, during his early life, direct student of Socrates.¹⁵⁶ Rare bits of biographical detail supplied by the author himself emerge in the dialogues. The *Apology* (34a) places Plato at Socrates' trial in 399 B.C., although he was not present for Socrates' death as depicted in the *Phaedo* (59b). Aside from later sources like Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius, much of the contemporaneous biographical information we have about Plato comes from the so-called *Letters*, and in particular, the *Seventh Letter*. While the letter is of contested attribution, it is crucial to the arguments of certain modern writers on the purposes and intentions of Plato when writing the dialogues.¹⁵⁷ The *Letter* states that Plato was deterred from embarking on a career in politics twice. First he became disaffected with hardline oligarchy after seeing the abuses of his great-uncle Critias and uncle Charmides as part of the Thirty's regime (Pl. *L.* 7.325a). However, following that he became disaffected even with Athenian democratic politics following the eminently unjust and unholy (ἀνοσιωτάτην) conviction and execution of Socrates (Pl. *L.* 7.325b).

Addressing the question of why and to whom Plato was writing with his dialogues is an important question of this section, because, in the *Republic*, *Laws*, and other dialogues Plato makes strong normative claims about the ideal ordering of society which are

¹⁵⁵ See Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.32-56 for Critias' debate with Theramenes, a more moderate oligarch. Biographical details for Plato, Allen (2010): 11 and Ober (1998): 156.

¹⁵⁶ Diogenes Laertius 3; Ober (1998): 156.

¹⁵⁷ Ober (1998): 162 n. 16 reads the letter as if it were written by Plato or a member of the early Academy; Allen (2010): 12-13 doubts that it was written by Plato, yet still believes it to be a trustworthy source of information about his beliefs. It is a thoroughly contested subject, but I tend to agree with those who argue for attribution.

particularly related to Athenian πολυπραγμοσύνη. Political theorists like Strauss and Bloom see in Plato a heavy focus on irony in his own writing and beliefs (rather than just in the words of his version of Socrates), and a rejection of utopian ideals and an ability to directly influence political ends openly through writing.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, they see the goal of Plato and the *Republic* in particular as seeking to cultivate a love of philosophy in rulers, as a method of indirect leadership.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, scholars like Ober and Euben take Plato as genuinely intending political action and effect with his writings, although to different degrees of criticism, while refraining from the more extreme view offered by Popper, who saw Plato as wholeheartedly endorsing antidemocratic tyranny.¹⁶⁰ Ober classes Plato as largely a “rejectionist critic” of democracy who seeks not to reform the current society, but challenge and overthrow its dominant values.¹⁶¹ Allen, in seeking to interact with this question, argues for a kind of middle ground, saying that Plato’s political plan in the *Republic* is to “refashion Athenian political language” and cultural values. In her mind, “the utopian plan” of the dialogue that has caused such controversy “is a tool used” for that purpose.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Allen (2006): 127; Bloom (1991): 410: “The *Republic* serves to moderate the extreme passion for political justice by showing the limits of what can be demanded and expected of the city; and at the same time it shows the direction in which the immoderate desires can be meaningfully channeled.”

¹⁵⁹ Allen (2006): 128; Bloom (1991): 425 “The choice between the philosophic and tyrannic lives explains the plot of the *Republic*. Socrates takes a young man tempted by the tyrannic life and attempts to give him at least that modicum of awareness of philosophy that will cure him of the lust for tyranny.”

¹⁶⁰ Stances of Ober, Allen, and Popper summarized by Allen (2006): 129.

¹⁶¹ Ober (1998): 49.

¹⁶² Allen (2010): 19.

Allen therefore sees a broader political role for the philosopher and elite writers in public life than the previous writers mentioned. In her view Plato did seek the wholesale transformation of Athenian life towards the ideals of *Republic*, but sought to do such through education.¹⁶³ However, in this reading, Plato's education was not only that of elites, like in Strauss's and Bloom's view, but also education of a wider audience, through the use of the rhetorically constructed images such as the noble lie, the γενναῖον ψεῦδος (Pl. *Resp.* 414b-c). Such rhetorical images, while not being the truth prized by the philosopher, have a similar moral and actionable effect as truth on the broader populace.¹⁶⁴ Her thesis is supported by analyses of the speeches of the court orators, particularly Aeschines, Demosthenes, and Lycurgus, in which she identifies Platonic language and *topoi* in the debates about how best to respond to the foreign policy threat of Macedon as well as the domestic political conflicts between Aeschines and Demosthenes.¹⁶⁵ However, as Allen herself notes, such cross-references do not necessarily mean that the philosophers were influential in politics, but that the orators' debates were, like the works of the philosophers, grappling with the same fundamental and practical questions "of what type of city to build."¹⁶⁶ Regardless of whether Plato or someone in his close circle wrote the *Seventh Letter*, the fact that Plato claimed (or was seen to have claimed in his time) that education

¹⁶³ Allen (2010): 77.

¹⁶⁴ Allen (2010): 67-68. On pg. 5 of the same work she argues that the low rates of literacy were not necessarily an impediment to some dissemination of Plato's ideas solely beyond a literate and moneyed subsection of society, bringing up the fact that the Academy was not a hermetically sealed group, but as Kierstead (2013): 214 puts it, "The location and origins of the philosophical schools fed into their character in the fourth century as open, dynamic institutions with permeable boundaries with the rest of the Athenian polis."

¹⁶⁵ Allen (2010): 119-121.

¹⁶⁶ Allen (2010): 113.

in philosophy was necessary for rulers (Pl. *L.* 7.326b) seems to bear out the idea that Plato pragmatically sought to reshape the values of his own community, even if it was through writing and teaching rather than active political engagement.

If one understands Plato as a critic of Athenian democracy as existed in his time, therefore, the critiques his interlocutors make about Athenian political behaviors and political culture are necessarily reflective about the political climate in which he is writing. For the purpose of this project, discerning Plato's intent, or perhaps whether he had political orientations that could be actualized is secondary to understanding what his critiques reflect about democracy in his day. I do not deem it divisive to say that Plato can be construed as a "critic of popular rule," questioning the capability of the broader populace to engage in political decision-making, while raising questions of the necessity of expertise, and specialized knowledge in politics.¹⁶⁷ If Plato's views can be considered a reaction against Athenian democracy, the highly structured and regulated cities in speech that appear in the *Republic* and the *Laws* can be seen as being in explicit opposition to and in criticism of Athenian πολυπραγμοσύνη.

A section in the *Charmides* initially seems reminiscent of the kind of ἀπραγμοσύνη that Lyisas's elite speakers appear to be promoting when they tie their lack of political activity to both their "κόσμιος" and "σώφρων" characters. Socrates, speaking with Charmides, Plato's family member and future oligarchic revolutionary, describes his interlocutor as both handsome and of good family (Pl. *Charm.* 154b-d). Socrates inquires as to what the meaning of temperance (σωφροσύνη) is, and after several failed attempts, Charmides offers the formulation that it is "τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν," to mind one's own

¹⁶⁷ Ober (1998): 161.

business, or to do one's own things, claiming that he has heard it from another person (Pl. *Chrm.* 161b). Socrates, sardonically claiming that Charmides must have heard this from some other of the wise men (τῶν σοφῶν), rounds on Critias, who he believes to be the author of this dictum, calling it an enigma or riddle (ἀίνιγμα, 161c).

Socrates—taking “minding one's own things” literally, by understanding τὰ ἑαυτοῦ to mean an individual's physical possessions—asks whether a city would be well managed (εὖ οἰκεῖσθαι) if everyone produced everything they needed for themselves, if “there was a law commanding each man to weave and wash his own cloak, make his own shoes, and oil flask and scraper, and perform everything else by this same principle of keeping his hands off other people's things and by making and doing his own” (161e-162a). When Charmides agrees that this hypothetical would not be good governance, Socrates responds that if being governed temperately is the same as governing well (σωφρόνως γε οἰκοῦσα εὖ ἂν οἰκοῖτο), a city where everyone minded their own business (being the working temperate) would not be governed well, and therefore the two things are not the same (162a-b). Following this, Critias is incensed, and is depicted as having an emotional stake (162d-e) in this argument.

The situational use of the phrase τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, along with a praise of σώφρων behavior might remind the reader of Lysias's defenses of his wealthy clients. Yet, on the other hand, the fact that Plato has Critias—who was an actively violent member of the oligarchic faction—roused to defend such a claim, does not seem unintentional.¹⁶⁸ Several of Lysias's clients use the formulae of being σώφρων and minding their own business in the same breaths that they deny aiding and abetting the oligarchic revolutions

¹⁶⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.15 names Critias as specifically ordering the death of democratic sympathizers.

of the late fifth century.¹⁶⁹ Yet, as I hope to have demonstrated in my last chapter, in the fifth century, such language of encouraging others to mind their own business was often to circumscribe activity that was deemed unsuitable for them by another person.¹⁷⁰ While it should be remembered that this is a fictional dialogue, constructed perhaps decades after any hypothetical dramatic date, the fact that a pro-oligarchic aristocrat in mid-fifth century Athens (before the revolutions) could be plausibly presented as endorsing or having devised such a formulation fits with the essentially negative aristocratic attitude towards Athenian democratic political activity and behavior represented by πολυπραγμοσύνη.¹⁷¹

Critias would not (unlike Lysias's clients) perhaps deny that he was active in politics. He might, however, as a member of the χρηστοί, disdain the type of non-elite, active, and institutionally vigorous political activity represented by πολυπραγμοσύνη and embrace τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν as a proscriptive doctrine.¹⁷² Each one should do what is their own business, and explicit in the moral claims of the fifth-century χρηστοί (who might also indeed describe themselves as σώφρων and κόσμιος) is an expectation of a monopoly on

¹⁶⁹ Lys. 7.41, 20.14; Lateiner (1982): 7-9.

¹⁷⁰ Leigh (2013): 18: "It is the voluntary circumscription of one's own activities and is the opposite of unwelcome or uninvited intervention in that which is proper to others. Yet, it also admits of a more prescriptive application if we do not ourselves decide what is our proper business but have that decisions made for us."

¹⁷¹ Nails (2002): 311 puts an estimated dramatic date at 430 B.C., when Critias is in middle age, and Charmides—whom we can say was at least of a politically active age in 404/403 B.C.—is still in his youth.

¹⁷² Socrates offers a detailed backstory of the honor, fame, and wealth embodied in the aristocratic lineage of both Critias and Charmides at Pl. *Chrm.* 157e-158c. Connor (1971): 18-22; Ober (1989): 85 and 251.

influencing civic life.¹⁷³ Meanwhile their opposites, the πονηροί, who seek power through serving as public speakers, council members, or court litigants, are to be deterred.¹⁷⁴ It is true that in this dialogue, Critias refrains from exploring the political implications of such a formulation in search of a better definition of σωφροσύνη, yet the fictional Critias exists in a different political world than his analogues in Lysias’s speeches. Whereas Critias might be able to wholeheartedly adopt the claim that one should “mind their own business”—given that part of his culturally entitled business is politics—following the tyrannies, it is not acceptable for a wealthy litigant in popular rhetoric to embrace participation in politics as part of their “own business,” or to seek to circumscribe that of others as a matter of due course. Plato, on the other hand, writing dialogues rather than public speeches, has a freedom to interact with, and expand—possibly to an unrecognizable extent—the political notions behind this throwaway phrase of an aristocratic partisan.¹⁷⁵

The formulation of τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν appears in the *Republic* at a crucial point, and when it does appear, it is directly paired with πολυπραγμοσύνη. While initially

¹⁷³ Rosenbloom (2004): 56 n. 3 notes that a host of associated terms with χρηστός are “*kalos k’agathos, gennaios, eugenes, dikaios, sophron, kosimos, metrios, dexios, mousikos, eusebes*”. Rosenbloom (2004): 63: “This ideological positioning legitimates its moral leadership (*aretê*) and elicits the consent, honor (*timê*), and gratitude (*charis*) of all classes”; Ar. *Eq.* 1274-75 praises the χρηστοί as worthy of being well reckoned, “ὅστις εὖ λογίζεται.”

¹⁷⁴ Rosenbloom (2004): 61: “Leaders marked *ponêros* perform speaking roles that require knowledge of political and legal procedure, but they lack traditional elite attributes; they serve as un-elected *rhêtôres* and allotted *bouletai*.”

¹⁷⁵ Leigh (2013): 19 calls this an “avowedly commonplace” phrase, and Critias’s use of it as reflective of a more popular usage, while Adkins (1976): 302 sees it as important that the definition comes from Critias or “another wise man,” meaning that it is not simply a popular convention. On 325 Adkins argues that in using the phrase τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, Charmides and Critias “evidently wished to confine political activity to their own, very small, group of aristocratic Athenians.”

constructing the idealized city in speech, *Kallipolis*, Socrates has Glaucon and Adeimantus agree to a principle of division of labor: a person does a better job if they only practice a single craft, and does the best at the single craft to which they are naturally suited (Pl. *Resp.* 2.370b-c). He further argues that one person cannot attempt to “dabble in many things” (ἐπιχειροῖ, πολλῶν ἐφαπτόμενος), because they will not be good at them (Pl. *Resp.* 3.394e). Such an agreement may not be objectionable under some branches of modern economic theory and conceptions of labor specialization.¹⁷⁶ But it becomes more controversial and contradictory to Athens’ popular democratic ideology as the dialogue continues, and the principle of specialization is extended beyond the economic and into the political and social fields. Socrates notes that such principles lead to a city where one finds a “cobbler who is a cobbler, and not also a captain along with his cobbling, and a farmer who is a farmer and not also a juror along with his farming” (Pl. *Resp.* 3.397e). Such an argument is antithetical to the democracy at its core—the very nature of the council, the assembly, and the juries is predicated on the democratic belief that the wisdom of mass and collective decision-making was superior, and that all citizens could participate, even if they were a cobbler or a farmer.¹⁷⁷ To push it farther, structurally, Athenian democracy in the fourth

¹⁷⁶ Ober (2008): 94 connects this argument with the modern theory of Taylorist and Fordist industrial organization, which involves applying expert technical knowledge in the management echelons to determine best practices and production strategies and imparting it down to the non-experts at the lower echelons of decision-making.

¹⁷⁷ Ober (1998): 33. Markle (1985): 275: “The kinds of citizens who predominated in the Athenian assembly were craftsmen, traders, and farmers, and these persons required some compensation for loss of earnings when they took time off from their occupations to attend the assembly.” Xen. *Mem.* 3.7.6 has Socrates describe assembly attendants as “fullers, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, farmers, merchants, or traders...”

century *required* the participation of those workers without leisure.¹⁷⁸ These are the same men who most obviously did not have the time—as the Athenian Stranger mandates for citizens in Plato’s *Laws* for largely the same reasons of lack of competence at more than one profession as in the *Republic*—to refrain from work and solely cultivate civic virtue.¹⁷⁹

Socrates himself notes that this forced separation of citizen duties is something that could happen solely in *Kallipolis*. The fact that each person is not two or multiple

¹⁷⁸ I take the council as an example, because the council is often said to have been the least open to wage laborers given that it met on a daily basis (and members even slept in the Pyrtaneion during their Prytany), according to Rhodes (1972): 30-31. Therefore it is most often considered to have been a full-time occupation in the way that Plato’s Socrates discusses here. Hansen (1986): argues that the institutional structure of the *boule* in Athens meant that it required at least 19,000 citizens to be of serving age (above 30) in the population in the fourth century, which would mean that if the citizen population was near 25,000 or even 30,000 as Hansen and others argue, then anywhere from 63-76 percent of the citizen body had to serve on the *boule* for it to function adequately. Hansen (1999): 249 again notes that almost two thirds of citizens over forty would have served on the council in their lifetime, and the *boule* itself must have required a “reasonable” number of *thetes*, the lowest wealth class of the Athenian citizenry. Sinclair (1988): 106 argues that in the fifth century there was a restriction on the *thetic* class serving in the council, but “it was very likely that by the 320s the question of the census class was ignored, as it was in respect to the election of archons, and that *thetes* were members of the council.” As Markle (1985): 271 argues, the point of instituting assembly, council, and jury pay was to enable those who work full time to support themselves and their dependents “to take time off from their occupations to perform public service and attend festivals.” Sinclair (1988): 108 also argues that the payment to councilors was more regular, and higher (5 obols), and more frequent (260 days of service) than either assembly or jury pay, and might have been enough to allow a laborer to participate in most or all of the meetings with good conscience.

¹⁷⁹ Pl. *Leg.* 8.846b-847b (block translations of Platonic dialogues are all from Cooper (1997) unless otherwise noted) “A citizen’s vocation, which demands a great deal of practice and study, is to establish and maintain good order in a community, and this is not a job for part-timers.” I would argue that in contrast, Athenian government in the fourth century could be considered wholly as a job of part-timers, particularly the assembly, the courts, and to a lesser degree, the council. Yes, given the regularity of meetings, frequency of court cases, and requirements of the council, Athenian government may have been a democracy of part-timers, but certainly not amateurs. Harris (1986): 363 notes that the Assembly met at least four times per prytany, which means at minimum, forty meetings per year.

people simultaneously, as Socrates puts it (διπλοῦς ἀνὴρ παρ' ἡμῖν οὐδὲ πολλαπλοῦς, *Pl. Resp.* 3.397e), certainly differs from the vision of Thucydides' Pericles in the Funeral Oration. He, speaking to a popular audience, praised Athens as one of the sole places in Greece that produces versatile and dexterous citizens (εὐτραπέλως, *Thuc.* 2.41) who, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, are able to attend well to their own private as well as public affairs (τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν, *Thuc.* 2.40). Socrates does not at this point name Athens as the subject of his barbs, but one can easily see what he leaves out. The multiplicity of roles that any individual can fulfill in Athenian democracy, be it cobbler and juror, sailor and assemblyman, peasant farmer and councilman, which Pericles praises as the heart of what a democratic constitution is, are conspicuously absent. In fact, the tripartite structure of rulers, guardians, and laborers is to be fixed in place by the noble falsehood (γενναῖον ψεῦδος) and foundational myth of *Kallipolis* that legitimizes the firm division of individuals into separate immutable classes (*Pl. Resp.* 3.414c). Socrates states that it will be given out that a divine oracle foretells disaster for the city if the classes are ever to be mixed (*Pl. Resp.* 3.415c). For, given that Socrates had stated (and his interlocutors agreed) that individuals are suited to only be in one of the three classes in the city by nature, and that the individuals in each class are only able to do one thing well, it would be harmful to the proper functioning of the city if citizens were to switch roles (*Pl. Resp.* 4.434b).

Socrates goes on to offer the formulation that in the proposed city (in speech), justice is therefore “for each one to do one’s own things and not to meddle” (ὅτι τὸ αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος εἷς ὧν ἔπραττε καὶ οὐκ ἐπολυπραγμόνει, 4.433d). In the inverse, injustice in the city therefore is for “there to be exchange between the different classes and meddling in

the jobs of others” (δοκεῖν ταύτην τὴν τούτων μεταβολὴν καὶ πολυπραγμοσύνην ὄλεθρον εἶναι τῇ πόλει, 4.434b-c). Πολυπραγμοσύνη, in the words of Socrates, results in the destruction of the highly ordered and segmented polity of the proposed city (in speech). This city, which is both self-controlled and moderate (σώφρονα), and ruled by the prudent minority of best-educated and best-natured individuals (φρονήσεως τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἐλάττοσί τε καὶ ἐπιεικεστέροις, 4.431d), is also just. The fact that Socrates offers πολυπραγμοσύνη as the worst injustice in such a city could not have been lost on the contemporary Athenian ear. Unlike the orators, who used the charge of πολυπραγμοσύνη to rhetorically negate their individual opponents’ behaviors in the eyes of the jurors, Plato—like Thucydides—offers a definition of πολυπραγμοσύνη that is leveled at the institutions and character of the democratic Athenian *polis* as a whole. By tying injustice to πολυπραγμοσύνη, Socrates’ critique is aimed squarely at Athens, where part-timers and the less formally educated enjoyed a share in and sometimes dominated politics.¹⁸⁰

Socrates further ties such meddling specifically to democratic constitutions, when he notes that oligarchy (having previously devolved from the best regime to timocracy, and then to oligarchy) devolves to democracy partly because it allows meddling; under this constitution, oligarchs—who fear to arm the masses—have to serve as farmers, money-makers, and soldiers all at the same time (8.551e). The fact that property can be sold in an oligarchy allows for the creation of a class of those without property, “πένητες”—a word of contested meaning, ranging from day laborers to indigent poor—that eventually endeavors

¹⁸⁰ Ancient sources also referred to them as the poor: Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.2; Pl. *Resp.* 8.557.

to establish a democracy.¹⁸¹ The democracy is characterized by many of the things that Socrates praised his *Kallipolis* for lacking, namely total freedom, freedom of speech, and the license for each individual to do as they wish (ἐλευθερίας ἢ πόλις μεστή καὶ παρρησίας γίγνεται, καὶ ἐξουσία ἐν αὐτῇ ποιεῖν ὅτι τις βούλεται, 8.557b).¹⁸² In the democratic city one finds people of all variety of types (παντοδαποὶ δὴ ἄν οἶμαι ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ πολιτείᾳ, 8.557c). Socrates calls democracy an anarchic constitution—literally “ἄν-αρχος,” without rulers—that provides equality to equals and non-equals alike (ἴσοις τε καὶ ἀνίσοις, 8.558c).

In creating *Kallipolis*, Socrates identifies (and circumscribes) two interlocking facets of democratic life—freedom and πολυπραγμοσύνη. The just city is radically different from a democracy in its relationship to freedom and permissiveness. The social structure is rigid, and all roles, be they economic or civic, are specialized according to individual natures. Participation of individuals in the diverse roles of wage-labor, farming, commerce, law court judging, assembly decision-making, and military service—all roles that an Athenian citizen might plausibly fulfill over the course of their lifetime, sometimes simultaneously¹⁸³—is made possible by the political equality and freedom that democratic regimes offer. The democratic constitution, in Plato’s telling, does not only permit, but actively promotes dabbling in many things. However, in the just city, such behavior is

¹⁸¹ Markle (1985): 268: “Use of the terms πενία and ἀπορία and their related forms by other ancient writers also indicates that the poor included people who had to work for a living and lacked leisure. Indeed, the nouns πενία and πένης are derived from the verb πένομαι which means to ‘labour’.”

¹⁸² At *Pl. Resp.* 4.431b Socrates had noted that “one finds all kinds of diverse desires, pleasures, and pains, mostly in children, women, household slaves, and in those of the inferior majority called free.” In the city in speech, as was noted above, inferior many are ruled by and restrained by the prudent few (4.431d).

¹⁸³ Leigh (2013): 20.

characterized as πολυπραγμοσύνη, and the height of injustice. In making his broader arguments about the moral licentiousness (*Resp.* 8.556-558, *Leg.* 3.700-701) and political amateurism of democratic life, Plato places the fact that the Athenians are busy about and dabble in many things (πολυπραγμονοῦσι) as one of the key facets of such a life.

Socrates' stated goal in constructing the just city in the *Republic* is to offer by analogy the example of the just man (*Resp.* 4.435b). This text has therefore been read as not offering practical political suggestions.¹⁸⁴ Yet, some of the ideological implications, if not practical blueprint of the *Republic* are also expressed in Plato's *Laws*. The hypothetical *polis* described in the *Laws* also emphasizes unity and order, while at the same time seeking to minimize contact between social classes, enforcing specialization, and endorsing associational rigidity—offering another way to reducing the ability or intention for citizens to “dabble in many things.” Again, because of Plato's status as a critic of democracy (and the fact that his primary speaker in the laws is the “Athenian Stranger”) the innovations introduced in the *Laws* are particularly interesting for what they reveal in relationship or in opposition to Athens.¹⁸⁵

In the *Republic*, the commercial and laboring classes are to have no say in political leadership, but they are still considered to be part of the state.¹⁸⁶ However, in the *Laws*, the *metics* and slaves in the city—who lack political or even long-term residence rights—fill the

¹⁸⁴ Allen (2006): 127-128; Pl. *Resp.* 9.592b offers the possibility of the existence of the just city as a blueprint for a real *polis* as ambiguous: “But perhaps, I [Socrates] said, there is a model of it in heaven, for anyone who wants to look at it and to make himself its citizen on the strength of what he sees. It makes no difference whether it is or ever will be somewhere, for he would take part in the practical affairs of that city and no other.”

¹⁸⁵ Ober (1998): 160.

¹⁸⁶ Establishing their status and co-fraternity with the other classes of the state is the point of the noble lie in *Resp.* 4.414b.

same roles that the lowest class of citizens did in the *Republic*. *Metics* are allowed to stay in the city for only twenty years (Pl. *Leg.* 8.850b-c), while slaves are to be imported from different countries and speak different languages, and therefore have little cultural or social connection to the city whatsoever (*Leg.* 6.777c-d).¹⁸⁷ Like the *Republic*, strict separation of roles is enforced to a degree: citizens are banned from working as craftspeople and laborers (*Leg.* 8.846d), as such roles are only to be filled by *metics* (*Leg.* 8.849d). Even within the class of craftspeople and laborers, there is to be no switching of roles.¹⁸⁸ In contrast to contemporary Athens, the laboring class is not only institutionally excluded from politics, but also spatially separated from each other and the rest of the citizens through their residency in thirteen separate districts around the city (*Leg.* 8.848e).¹⁸⁹ The only interactions between citizens and the craftsmen *metics* are to be through mediated and regulated business in the city's twelve separate and orderly markets, overseen by the market-wardens, and then only on specific days of the month (*Leg.* 8.848e-849c). Such activity is a far cry from the agora at Athens, which served as a civic, commercial, and social space.¹⁹⁰ The Athenian agora provided the backdrop for interactions

¹⁸⁷ Stalley (1983): 106-108.

¹⁸⁸ This is a law to be enforced by the City-Wardens (*Leg.* 8.847a). In the *Republic*, Socrates and Glaucon had agreed that a carpenter attempting "to do the work of a cobbler" would do some small harm to the city, but far less notable when compared to the harm of a craftsman attempting enter the ranks of soldiers (Pl. *Resp.* 4.434b).

¹⁸⁹ Sobak (2015): 705 n. 71.

¹⁹⁰ Wycherly (1956): 3: "If law-courts were embedded in market-districts, political activity too was not confined to council-house and magistrates' office but was carried on vigorously in the neighboring shops just as in the cafés of modern Athens"; Camp (1992): 122: While many of the smaller shops were not on the public square known as the agora proper in the fifth century, there were also large *stoai* constructed as early as the 420s B.C. (such as "South Stoa I") where

between many different social classes and individuals, often to the chagrin of conservative critics at the time.¹⁹¹ In this way the Athenian interlocutor of the *Laws* appears acutely aware of and responsive to Athenian social behaviors that are not what we in the modern day would call political, but seem to be linked together for ancient thinkers.

The fact that the ideal city of Magnesia in the *Laws* is characterized not only by institutional and social rigidity but also geographic and spatial separation highlights one of the characteristics of πολυπραγμοσύνη that has been teased at by various writers who had associated it with the urban polis, the agora, and the civic institutions, but not explicitly drawn the connection. In Plato, the polypragmatic behaviors that characterize democratic cities are not only institutional; they also refer to types of individual behaviors that expand purely social interactions and increase contact between the ostensibly separated groups in the ideal *poleis*. Whether the intended goal, or part of a broader goal of creating unity in these ideal cities, it seems that both the Athenian Stranger and Socrates (and other conservative critics of socializing, politicking, and non-elite interactions in the agora) attempt to hamper a process of democratic information-gathering and knowledge sharing that is only made possible in a city where individuals are polypragmatic—where the farmer and urban laborer (or the silversmiths and the cobblers) work and trade together in the

private individuals were allowed to carry out commerce in the heart of the agora. South Stoa I itself bordered the Heliaia, the main court of the city.

¹⁹¹ Vlassopoulos (2007): 40; Aristotle *Politics* 1331b argues that in his ideal city that there should be different agorai and locations for economic business, for sacred buildings, law courts, and leisure. He recommends particularly a Thessalian agora, which is called a “ἐλευθέραν,” into which “no artisan or farmer may intrude unless summoned by the magistrates.”

agora, attend the assembly together and serve on the council, and perhaps serve in the military together.¹⁹²

It is not, however, only the *metics* and citizens who are separated spatially from each other in this *polis*, it is also the citizens who are set spatially apart from each other as well. In the ideal state of the *Laws*, all families are to own equally divided lots of agricultural land (*Leg.* 5.737d-e), making them in essence, farmers. As was mentioned above, citizens are to refrain from manufacture and trade but it is not entirely clear whether these citizens will be working their own land, or slaves will be doing it for them.¹⁹³ The fact that the citizens are ordered to concentrate solely on maintaining good order, which requires study and practice, and is not a part-time job, seems at odds with the Athenian Stranger's comments that the lowest two classes of the citizen population need not (and presumably will not regularly) attend the assembly (6.764a). In the theorized Magnesia the citizens are to own land, serve in the military, and elect leaders and (to a degree) engage in politics—something that appears to be breaking the dictum set down in the republic of specialization. However, Stalley notes that the roles that had previously been kept away from the guardians and the rulers of *Kallipolis* by assigning them to the lowest class of citizens, in this case have been pawned off on the *metics* and the slaves of the city, who do not participate in the franchise.¹⁹⁴ In the case of the *Laws*, the citizens are homogenized and

¹⁹² Vlassopoulos (2007): 40; *Ar. Nub.* 1002-8; Theophrastus's *Characters* abound with individuals who are presented as being particularly onerous, chatty, and gossiping in marketplaces; Aristophanes' characters (*Ar. Ach.* 725) particularly associate the agora with commerce, *πολυπράγμονες*, and sycophants; as mentioned in the last chapter, the *autourgos* in Euripides' *Orestes* 930 is notable and praised for rarely being in the marketplace.

¹⁹³ Stalley (1983): 102.

¹⁹⁴ Stalley (1983): 111.

given roughly the same roles, and much of their association and personal contact is not separate from, but under the umbrella of the central state. The twelve village centers established outside of the main city center in Magnesia (known as demes) are “spatially extended enough not to be natural sites of associational activity.”¹⁹⁵ While the citizens are often brought together to eat in common messes established by the state called *syssitia*, (*Leg.* 1.635e-636a) they are not particularly encouraged to associate formally or informally outside of the institutions of the central state. Solidarity is so important to Magnesia that the Athenian Stranger can say that “ἔταιρεία,” companions, clubs, or associations, are one of the most dangerous things for the state.¹⁹⁶

The fact that the Stranger in Plato’s *Laws* spatially separates and regulates the kind of behaviors that are allowed to occur in the agorai of Magnesia is perhaps one of the greatest ways that he differentiates his cities from the contemporary Athenian life. To an elite critic such as Plato, the agora of Athens might represent the height of πολυπραγμοσύνη. As noted before, those seeking information, rumors, and gossip all operate in the marketplace and by the court buildings located therein. However, a huge variety of interconnected and diverse activities happened on a daily basis in the Athenian agora. After listing the variety of judicial, economic, conversational, and entertainment activities that went on in one of Athens’ large *stoai*¹⁹⁷—the architecturally open, covered,

¹⁹⁵ Kierstead (2013): 6.

¹⁹⁶ Kierstead (2013): 7.

¹⁹⁷ Millett (1998): 215: The Stoa Poikile served as a patriotic art gallery, a military museum, an execution chamber, a location for arbitration, a law-court, a strolling place for the stoic philosophers and fashionable men of letters, as well as a haven of street entertainers and beggars.

and multifunctional colonnades that surrounded the city's squares¹⁹⁸—Millet summarizes them as synecdoche of the activities in Athens' agora as a whole:

“The mixing of activities and persons within the space of the Stoa Poikile exemplifies in miniature the blending of formal and informal, public and private that went on over the whole of the Agora area. In civic terms, the classical Agora was the setting for administration, publicity, justice, ostracism, imprisonment, religion, processions, dancing, athletics, and equestrian displays. In addition to persons passing through, individuals might gather there to get information (official or otherwise), gather a crowd, gamble, torture a slave, get hired as labourers, bid for contracts, accost a prostitute, seek asylum, have a haircut, beg for money or food, fetch water, watch a cock-fight and find out the time. The list is hardly exhaustive. And going on all around was the business of buying and selling.”¹⁹⁹

In contrast, Plato separates the civic and political from the economic, commercial, and social in the *Laws*. Assemblies are moved to religious sites (*Leg.* 5.738d) and magistrates are to be elected in temples (*Leg.* 8.848d). As was mentioned above, strict regulations are imposed on buying and selling, and interactions between citizens, slaves, and *metic* craftspeople in the marketplaces are monitored for their conduct; goods are sold for fixed prices (*Leg.* 8.849-850a). In contrast, in Millett's words, the agora of Athens provided a “neutral stage on which all citizens, however poor, had good reason regularly to appear, relate to, and (if they wished) compete with each other.”²⁰⁰ The structure of Athens' own agora and its relationship to civic spaces also keys into one of Plato's key arguments against *πολυπραγμοσύνη*. The spatial closeness of the workshops and stalls to civic spaces allows

¹⁹⁸ Wycherly (1978): 37 notes the radical openness of the *stoai*: “essentially it was a long narrow structure with a solid wall on one long side and an open colonnade on the other” and “was not attached to any other structure, but rather formed the edge of an open space.”

¹⁹⁹ See Millett (1998): 215 cf. n. 25 on 215-216 for what is an incredibly extensive list of literary references in classical Athenian literature to all of the above activities happening in the Athenian agora.

²⁰⁰ Millett (1998): 220.

more individuals to participate more easily in the civic activities of the city. The hill of the Pnyx, which is near the agora, is less than a ten-minute walk away. Xenophon's "fullers, shoemakers, smiths, peasants, and merchants" are enabled to dominate the assembly, partially because the assembly is so close to their place of work.²⁰¹ It is not hard to imagine that many of the *banausoi* of Athens' marketplace could attend some of the shorter assembly meetings.²⁰² They could have performed this duty without significant cost to their earnings in a given day, especially if many of their clients and neighboring vendors were doing the same.²⁰³ For those wishing to attend the courts, the spatial location was even more congruous—most courts met in the agora. Many private suits were over in two hours, and while public suits had the potential to last all day, jurors were still compensated.²⁰⁴

The cities of the *Republic* and the *Laws* are not structurally or entirely ideologically consistent with each other, nor do they have to be for the purposes of this study.²⁰⁵ What is crucial about the two depictions of idealized states in Plato's works is what they reveal

²⁰¹ Millett (1998): 223.

²⁰² Hansen (1999): 136 notes that it was noteworthy that meetings might go from dawn to dusk. More often than not, the Athenian assembly meetings (which began in the morning) probably lasted a few hours and were over by midday. The fact that the council often met for their daily meeting after assembly meetings demonstrates that meetings could not have regularly been all day affairs.

²⁰³ The fact that the assembly became paid throughout the fourth century certainly would have aided this process as well, at a rate that started at 3 obols for an assembly meeting, which grew to 1 drachma, according to *Ath. Pol.* 41.3 and Jones (1952): 14. On 23–24 Jones also heartily rejects the claim that one could make a living drawing pay from serving on the various organs of government. The yearlong council pay could only be drawn for at most, twice in a lifetime, while the possibility of being one of the 6000 jurors in a given year was slim and not something to be counted on. He sums up: "The majority of the citizens were then workers who earned their own livings and whose political pay served only to compensate them in some measure for loss of working time."

²⁰⁴ Hansen (1999): 186–187.

²⁰⁵ Stalley (1983): 8.

about what Plato, an acute observer and critic of Athenian political life, saw as particularly noteworthy and particularly democratic. Beginning with the contentions that individuals are best suited to one role, and that political expertise requires specialization and education not available to the majority of citizens in his contemporary democracy due to both their lack of education and natural capacities, Plato's characters construct highly ordered societies, and therefore remove non-elites from the processes of political decision-making. Underlying the arguments of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, and explicitly stated in the *Statesman*, is the contestation that the majority of these non-elite individuals (who served as jurors, assemblymen, and magistrates in democratic Athens) had any sort of knowledge of a political art of ruling that was distinct from their own discrete and separate trades (Pl. *Plt.* 305c). Here the ideal ruler is posited as the one that knows how to organize these discrete and separate arts based on when is the right and wrong time to use them (305d). It could be noted that such an organization of the discrete and separate trades by a single mind is essentially the ideal that is expressed in the social organizations in the *Republic* and the *Laws*.²⁰⁶ There society is ordered by educated elites who (in the *Republic* in particular) grasp the expert knowledge of the Form of the Good, one that is "not communicable to non-experts."²⁰⁷ Plato is therefore concerned with, and highly critical of the value of knowledge among common people, particularly those that participated in Athens' democracy, and the possibly of such knowledge to shape good decision-making.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Sobak (2015): 705.

²⁰⁷ Ober (2008): 93.

²⁰⁸ Bang (2009): 449.

Plato's emphasis on questioning popular wisdom and establishing different standards of valid knowledge than that of the democratic populace is directly related to his desire to limit πολυπραγμοσύνη in both of his cities. My sketch of the πολυπράγμων in fifth and fourth century Athenian literature suggests that one of the primary facets of the πολυπράγμων, and of a cultural stereotype of a busybody—even in our day—is inquisitive, active, and information-seeking behavior. The orators (who have rhetorical defense as their goals) and playwrights (who had comedy as theirs) had often connected the gathering and spread of such information to the goal of aiding libelous prosecutions, abetted by slander and rumor. Such behavior can really only be played out in the open spaces of the city—particularly in places like the agora, in ways that I have already sketched out above. Demosthenes notes that his opponent in *Against Aristogeiton* makes his way through the marketplace seeking individuals against whom to bring calumny or mischief (Dem. 25.52). Demosthenes additionally calls Aristogeiton part of a class of meddlers (τῶν περιεργαζομένων, Dem. 26.15). Aristophanes' *Wealth* ties the spread of rumors in the polis to the people who sit gossiping in barbers' shops (Ar. *Plut.* 337-338), and in a fragment of Eupolis a slave announces that he learns many things in the barbershops. When Peisetairos, the embodiment of Athenian πολυπραγμοσύνη in Aristophanes' *Birds*, critiques the Birds for being ignorant and not inquisitive (ἀμαθῆς γὰρ ἔφυς κοῦ πολυπράγμων, Ar. *Av.* 469-471), he highlights the relationship between information gathering and πολυπραγμοσύνη.

One of the most notable images of the information gathering πολυπράγμων comes from Plato himself. His Socrates, in the *Apology*, when on trial for his life, admits that his traditional activity of interrogating individuals about their morals in private (ἰδίᾳ μὲν ταῦτα συμβουλεύω) might be viewed as meddling (πολυπραγμονῶ, Pl. *Ap.* 31c). The use of

“ιδίᾳ” which can mean “in private,” or “as a private citizen” is in this case deceiving. While Socrates claims to never have had any public political role of speaking in the assembly, holding magisterial office, or pursuing lawsuits in the courts (Pl. *Ap.* 32b), his inquiries are an entirely public affair. In Plato’s dialogues, they more often take place in public spaces such as the agora, public *stoai*, on the streets of Athens, at open *palaestra* and *gymnasia*, inhabited by and including diverse social classes and individuals and in front of spectators just as they are to be private conversations set in the homes of Socrates’ wealthy and aristocratic associates.²⁰⁹ Xenophon (in contrast to Plato) represents Socrates as actually interacting with many artisans and laborers, and other lower folk.²¹⁰ In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates himself mentions that he has interrogated the manual artisans (Pl. *Ap.* 22b) along with the poets and the politicians as to their sources of wisdom. For both the sycophant and the itinerant philosopher, figures that are tarred with the name of *πολυπράγμων*, the intermingling, spatial closeness, and occupational diversity that is present in Athens is crucial to their business of generating and sifting through information in a democratic city-state. Athens was not, as multiple scholars have noted, a face-to-face society with “everyone knowing everyone else and their business.”²¹¹ However, “free spaces” in Athens like the agora, which gathered—either due to business, politics, or leisure—a wide variety of individuals of differing social status and function (some citizens, some not) were crucial

²⁰⁹ In the agora: *Menexenus*, *Parmenides*; in streets and public places: *Gorgias*, *Second Alcibiades*, *Greater Hippias*, *Ion*, *Meno*; at *palestrai*, *gymnasia* and other schools: *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*; Public buildings and *stoai*: *Euthyphro*, *Eryxias*, *Theages*. Locations taken from Nails (2002): 308-330.

²¹⁰ Xen, *Mem.* 3.10.1.

²¹¹ Millett (1998): 228; Vlassopoulos (2007): 36.

for maintaining the possibility and opportunities for random or deliberate information gathering through encounters between citizens.²¹²

Whether entirely intentional or simply a side goal of his broader philosophic treatments of the just cities, in constructing elaborately rigid and spatially separated societies Plato negates even the possibility of these kinds of exchanges, contacts, and accumulation and dispersal of knowledge between groups and classes that is represented by the Socratic πολυπράγμων. There also would have been little room in Plato's ideal cities for many of the characters depicted by the writer Theophrastus, comic types that nevertheless reveal some things about Athenian social behavior in the fourth century.²¹³ Such figures not only include the περίεργος, a fourth century synonym for πολυπράγμων,²¹⁴ but also the chatty individual who goes about from group to group, marketplace to *palestra*, seeking and spreading information (Theophr. *Char.* 7.4-6.), or the garrulous man who approaches strangers in public places and engages them in conversation unprompted (Theophr. *Char.* 3.1-3). Obviously, such individuals are presented as caricatures, but Plato's ideal societies seem to present little use for such individuals—they are idlers, dabblers in many things that are not their own, and busybodies. I only hint here at the value that such individuals like Plato's Socrates and even Theophrastus's "garrulous man" have for the functioning of the democracy—that will be a major piece of my final chapter.

²¹² Vlassopoulos (2007): 38: "Free spaces are spaces that brought together citizens, metics, slaves and women, created common experiences and interactions, and shaped new forms of identity. We can define a number of such spaces: the agora, the workplace, the tavern, the house, the trireme, and the cemetery." Cf. Millett (1998): 228.

²¹³ Ussher (1993): 23.

²¹⁴ Leigh (2013): 48.

Plato's work demonstrates clearly that—at least in his mind—πολυπραγμοσύνη was a crucial part of the Athenian democratic character and experience, both an outgrowth of the rule of the many and the political equality and freedom that Athenian social and political life introduced. Thus, it was something to be limited and mitigated, and his prescriptions for *Kallipolis* and the city of Magnesia in the *Laws* reflect this desire, through the institution of rigid specialization of both political and economic roles. Yet, it seems that Plato's spatially separated and closed societies do not simply work towards the goal of creating expertise by promoting specialization. They also seem particularly geared towards hampering the social conditions that allowed for the gathering of knowledge and its dispersal in democratic Athens—particularly in their antipathy to the mix of business, politics, and social life present in the Athenian agora. A crucial part about being a πολυπράγμων is not simply being a doer of many things, but also being a knower of many things. The fact that the way this elite epistemic critique of Athens is borne out in part by directly limiting πολυπραγμοσύνη points to a larger question of how the Athenian citizens generate, gather, and disperse knowledge amongst themselves, and the value and utility of polypragmatic behaviors to democratic decision-making.²¹⁵ In my next chapter—in conjunction with theories from modern social science—I hope to demonstrate that behaviors that are typically described as polypragmatic and negative (by both democrats and critics of the democracy) actually aided the Athenian process of knowledge dispersal, enforced and supported community norms, and led to the kind of political and community

²¹⁵ Sobak (2015): 704.

culture that could truly be described by Thucydides as innovative, swift, and adventurous.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Thuc. 1.70.

Chapter Four

Epistemic Democracy and the Polypragmon

The broad Platonic critique of Athenian culture, political institutions, and social structure that I have highlighted in the *Republic*, *Laws*, and the *Statesman* was primarily concerned with whether those making decisions in political institutions—namely, the diverse and significantly non-elite citizens of Athens—are capable of manifesting “a form of wisdom when they gather in political Assembly, and so prove capable of deciding what would be best for the polis,” as Ober has succinctly put it.²¹⁷ While the specifics differ from dialogue to dialogue, Plato’s characters argue that ruling is something that in idealization might be done by those individuals with a superior higher knowledge of governing. In the *Republic* philosophers or kings carry this out informed by the philosophic Form of the Good (Pl. *Resp.* 7.520b-521c), and in the *Statesman* by the unique individual who possesses a skill of a secondary level of knowledge from the discrete, separate, and subordinate *technai* that are the subject of their direction within the city (Pl. *Plt.* 304d-305d).²¹⁸ In the *Laws*, the small citizen body technically rules, but the highest sovereignty is given to the laws.²¹⁹ It has been noted by scholars that the Platonic treatment of the practical banausic arts and other *technai*—which lack the transcendent character of knowledge arrived at through “sight,

²¹⁷ Ober (1998): 160.

²¹⁸ Among the arts that are “set in motion” when it is “the right time to begin” and the “wrong time to begin” (305c-d) are the banausic arts involving “work with the hands,” (304b) the art of rhetoric (304c-e), generalship (304e), and the art of judgement (305c).

²¹⁹ Stalley (1983): 9: “Thus law in some ways takes the place of the philosopher kings who exercise sovereignty in the *Republic*. Since the ultimate purpose of law is, in Plato’s view, to make the citizens virtuous, law and education are so closely linked that at times they become almost indistinguishable.”

speculation, contemplation”—has led to a long-standing bias against and preference in higher education and scholarship for a non-banausic definition of “valid knowledge.”²²⁰

Plato’s critique of the capacity of democracies to use knowledge to function effectively works in tandem with, but is substantially different, from comments offered by other critics of the democracy. A critic like the Old Oligarch shares Plato’s concern about the morality and the excessive individual freedom permitted at Athens,²²¹ but makes his primary argument against the democracy not that the rule of the *demos*—synonymous with the worse people—is incompetent, but instead that it rules only in the interest of those worse many (Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.1). In fact, the Old Oligarch even grudgingly admits that the democracy is successful at perpetuating its own regime, but also at accomplishing things other city-states are unable to do (Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.1, 3.1). In a section of Aristotle’s *Politics* that has been contested in recent years, the philosopher notes that it is possible that in deliberation “each person that composes the crowd is not individually a good man, but when they join together they may be better, not individually, but collectively.”²²²

At the end of my previous chapter, I provisionally sought to connect Plato’s broader epistemic critique of democracy with the political and societal proposals that his

²²⁰ Egan (1987): 445. Lewis (1993): 176-178: “Epistemological notions in the Greek Platonic tradition have had a nagging resiliency through the ages, transported through time especially via the medium of the great English universities, and the instrument or the concept of liberal education.”

²²¹ Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.11; Pl. *Resp.* 8.563b equates the extensive political freedom to citizens available at Athens as having led to equal freedoms to social inferiors like slaves and *metics*.

²²² See Waldron (1995): 569 “I think that Aristotle, in espousing DWM, is in fact committing himself to the proposition that the many acting collectively may be a better judge than the few best not only of matters of fact, not only of social utility, but also and most importantly of matters of ethics, value, and the nature of the good life—issues which go beyond the mere accumulation of individual experiences.” In contrast, see Cammack (2013): 178.

characters espouse in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, particularly as they relate to πολυπραγμοσύνη. First, Plato's Socrates makes explicit the ties between a democratic political structure and the behaviors of πολυπραγμοσύνη. In the *Republic* and the *Laws*, one sees that it is the endless participation of the Athenians in multiple roles—as soldiers, artisans, members of associations, and most importantly, participants in decision-making bodies—as being the essentially polypragmatic characteristic of Athenian social and political life. In Plato's thought, this Athenian tendency to do many things is doubly dangerous—it ensures that individuals will never have the time to perfect one role and will never be an expert at one thing. Therefore they will sub-optimally fill all of the varied roles that they attempt to participate in, ruling being the most important of them.²²³ On first blush it may not seem that Plato's focus is specifically concerned with the other types of πολυπραγμοσύνη that I had sought to demonstrate in my previous chapters, as referenced by the fifth-century comedians and the fourth-century popular orators, who (in the case of Euripides and Aristophanes) may have questioned the values and character of frequent political, social, and economic busyness and involvement, but did not advocate for a reduction of the franchise or endorse anything like Plato's social structures. Their πολυπραγμοσύνη appears as a negative (or at least comic) behavior at the intersection of public and private life, featuring energetic, information gathering, agora residing, and lawsuit bringing πολυπράγμονες who are more on the nosy side of being a busybody, whereas Plato's polypragmatic democrats appear as the hyperactive doers and joiners—less

²²³ The depiction of the “democratic man” in Pl. *Resp.* 8.561c-d is similar in content to some of the characteristics of the πολυπράγμων. Plato is obviously playing up the fickle and disorderly aspect of the democratic man, but he is characterized by a multiplicity of impulses, which he alternatively acts on in seemingly irrational ways.

interested in information, they are doers of many things—the linguistic essence of πολύ-πράγματα.

Yet, I believe that the ways that Plato's ideal *poleis* attempt to impose social and spatial rigidity, mediated interactions between citizens, and an antipathy to the culture of free spaces that characterized Athens is an oblique response to the πολυπραγμοσύνη represented in the popular culture of Athens—particularly centered on limiting the spread and generation of democratic knowledge. I will not retread my arguments here, but I merely reintroduce them to make the argument that Plato's goal of limiting πολυπραγμοσύνη in a well-ordered state is equally designed to prevent the kinds of contexts that undergird the kinds of social, spatial, and situational interactions and ties that enable Plato's restless multifarious individuals to judge, vote, buy, sell, and gossip all on the same day in the same location as well as allow for any number of defendants and litigants to investigate both fact and rumor amongst their fellow citizens.

Largely because Plato's epistemic critique of democracy seems antithetical to any notion of a social basis for valid knowledge, and because the inquisitive πολυπράγμων which he so proscribes thrives off of a social setting, I see the πολυπράγμων and πολυπραγμοσύνη as being ripe for analysis on basis of modern social science scholarship examining social ties, and information dissemination and aggregation in diverse groups. I would particularly like to follow in the footsteps of modern scholars in the classics who seek to use theories in modern social science and sociology to resolve quandaries and criticisms (such as Plato's) about Athens' ability to design, implement and enact effective and "good" policy, in a context where authority political decision-making and executive action were dispersed broadly amongst a socioeconomically and geographically diverse

populace. By considering the macro-level issue of Athens as an epistemic democracy grappling with the question of how to manage and aggregate knowledge and inform its citizen body, one sees the behaviors of the polypragmatic individual emerge as a useful and necessary part of the democratic state's functioning. Such activity also need not be considered through the lens of altruism or patriotism—in a state such as Athens, πολυπραγμοσύνη on the part of individuals was indeed necessary to accomplish individual ends, be they for personal gain or in service of the state. By looking at the subject in this light, I hope to demonstrate how the behaviors described in such diverse works and contexts as πολυπραγμοσύνη could have contributed on an individual and micro-level structurally and socially to a macro-level governing environment where Athens could truly be considered as the nimble, innovative, and active and adventurous *polis* that Thucydides' Corinthians present it to be.

According to Ober, arguably the current leading scholar behind the synthesis of political science and classical studies on the subject of democracy, knowledge, and decision-making, a “democracy may said to be ‘epistemic’ to the degree to which it employs collective wisdom to make good policy.”²²⁴ This conception of democracy is not only concerned with whether, how, and why mass bodies might make good decisions, but is also interested in exploring the institutions and cultural context that facilitate the spread of necessary information in a social and political setting, and make such mass decision-making possible. Joshua Cohen first introduced the term epistemic democracy into social science literature in an article where he argued that in an epistemic conception of democracy, there exists an “*independent standard*” of correct decision-making, a “*cognitive*

²²⁴ Ober (2012): 119.

account of voting” that expresses beliefs about what correct policies are, rather than simply personal preferences, and an account of “*decision making* as a process of the adjustment of beliefs, adjustments that are undertaken in part in light of the evidence about the correct answer that is provided by the beliefs of others.”²²⁵ In his conception, “what the epistemic populist claims is that, when there is a general will, and public deliberation is guided by principles that define that will, the decisions of majorities about which policies to pursue can provide good evidence about which policies are in fact best.”²²⁶ Putting it a different way, List and Goodin argue that the aim of epistemic democracy has previously been defined in relation to that of procedural democracy: “for procedural democrats, democracy is not about tracking any ‘independent truth of the matter’; instead the goodness or rightness of an outcome is wholly constituted by the fact of its having emerged in some procedurally correct manner.”²²⁷ It is therefore the “application of the appropriate procedure which is itself constitutive of what the best or

²²⁵ Cohen (1986): 34. The title of Cohen’s article is “An Epistemic Conception of Democracy,” but the characteristics that I am describing here fall under his sub-category of “Epistemic Populism.”

²²⁶ Cohen (1986): 34.

²²⁷ List and Goodin (2001): 279, 282 on which they note some of the practical tenets of democratic proceduralism: “Democratic proceduralists of the broader variety have insisted, among other things, that elections should be ‘free and fair,’ with voting proceeding without intimidation or corruption, and all valid ballots being counted; that the franchise should be broad, and elections regular and frequent; that the rules governing voting should be common knowledge, and the procedure by which votes are transformed into decisions publicly transparent...that social decisions should be preceded by certain processes of reasoned political deliberation and communication, and that people affected by a decision ought be heard; and also that social decision procedures should be practically viable and implementable at acceptable costs.”

right outcome.”²²⁸ Scholars like David Estlund have advocated for a blending of the two views, arguing, “democratic laws claim legitimate authority in virtue of being the product of procedures that tend to make correct decisions.”²²⁹

Some of the earlier scholarship on this subject focused heavily on the “jury theorem” of the Marquis de Condorcet (first set down in 1785), which argued that when voters face two options, and vote independently of each other, and vote their judgment of what the right solution to the problem is, rather than their interests, and if they on average have a greater than fifty percent chance of being right, as the number of jurors increases to infinity, the probability that the majority vote will yield the right number approaches one-hundred percent. The initial version of such a theory’s premise was applied to jury trials in criminal cases, with a binary decision of guilty or not guilty, given a presumption that the jurors were legitimately attempting to discover the truth of the situation.²³⁰ Scholars have seen this as a powerful tool, and seek to expand the feasibility of his rule to allow it to apply to more than binary a-b decisions, such as ranking candidates amongst a variety of choices, or even to plurality voting procedures.²³¹ However, there are certainly limits to this theorem. Even though some scholars have argued that the theorem can hold in plurality voting situations even when some individual decision makers are likely to be right *less* than fifty percent of the time—and is therefore perhaps a more realistic model of the average voter’s competences²³²—the theorem could hold strongly for the inverse; if individuals are

²²⁸ List and Goodin (2001): 281.

²²⁹ Anderson (2008): 129-130.

²³⁰ Anderson (2006): 11; List and Goodin (2001): Ober (2008): 109.

²³¹ Young (1988): 1232. List and Goodin (2001): 284.

²³² List and Goodin (2001): 285.

less likely rather than more likely to make the wrong decision, adding more individuals to the process will increase the probability of choosing wrongly to a strong degree.²³³

Elizabeth Anderson highlights the limitation of relying on such simple models of mass decision-making in arguing for the epistemic competence of democracy. Her criticisms of solely using the Condorcet theorem also set out broader principles for institutional arrangements designed to promote the aggregation and responsiveness to diverse knowledge sources necessary for a successful and epistemic democracy. Condorcet relied on and assumed an epistemically homogenous citizen body (citizens all shared similar knowledge) that is not the case in democratic deliberation in both ancient and modern contexts. In fact, many arguments made for the knowledge-aggregating powers of democratic governance specifically highlight the diversity of knowledge in a community as a crucial benefit and necessity.²³⁴ Additionally, such a theory supposes that voters vote independently of one another, which excludes the ability to pool information. “Without access to public fora for sharing information and opinions beyond their immediate knowledge, voters are uninformed and often helpless.”²³⁵

Anderson, in setting out criteria for epistemic democracy, sees a useful analogy in the works of Friedrich Hayek, who argued that the problems of efficiently allocating

²³³ Gaus (1997): 150: “Populists should be cautious about appealing to the jury theorem, as it is not clear that it endorses widely responsive procedures: the probability of a correct answer plunges just as dramatically downward if the average voter is more likely to be wrong than right.”

²³⁴ Anderson (2006): 11: “Most of the problems democracies have to solve are complex, and have asymmetrically distributed effects on individuals according to their geographic location, social class, occupation, education, gender, age, race, and so forth. Since individuals are most familiar with the effects of problems and policies on themselves and those close to them, information about these effects is also asymmetrically distributed.”

²³⁵ Anderson (2006): 11.

economic resources could not be solved by state planning, “because these facts are never so given to a single mind,” and therefore “it is necessary that in the solution of the problem knowledge should be used that is dispersed among many people.”²³⁶ For Hayek, this translated to a preference for markets and price valuation as a method of economic resource allocation. Anderson argues that in terms of the spread of non-economic and other useful information there exists other ways that socially dispersed information can be transmitted through a society: “votes and talk—democratic institutions.”²³⁷ Such a description of the collective and dispersed intelligence existing in society fits with Landemore’s characterization of collective intelligence and distributed intelligence. *Collective intelligence* is the idea that the intelligence of the group is more than simply the sum of the individual intelligence of its members.²³⁸ It implies that there is a value added when the *distributed intelligence* of a given population or group is brought together by the “votes and talk” institutions that Anderson identifies with democracy. *Distributed intelligence* is a crucial concept to think about, especially when later considering the Athenian situation, because it implies that knowledge “cannot be simply traced to individual minds but rather to the interaction between those minds and between them and their environment.”²³⁹ The collective intelligence of a society too is distributed, “it is not located in one central entity, but stretched over many individuals and the cognitive artifacts that are part of their environment.”²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Hayek (1945): 530; Anderson (2006): 8-9.

²³⁷ Anderson (2006): 9.

²³⁸ Landemore (2008): 17-18.

²³⁹ Landemore (2008): 19-20.

²⁴⁰ Landemore (2008): 21.

John Dewey, as cited by Anderson, favored an account of democratic government similar to that proposed by Anderson and Landemore, calling it “the use of social intelligence to solve problems of practical interest,”²⁴¹ run first through the thought process of deliberation, then enactment, and then a responsive evaluation of the results. In her telling, “Dewey took democratic decision-making to be the joint exercise of practical intelligence by citizens at large, in interaction with their representatives and other state officials. It is cooperative social experimentation.”²⁴² Dewey saw that universal inclusion in a democratic system ensured first that the problems being addressed were genuinely in the public interest (if majorities of the population seek to act on them) as well as a crucial means of “pooling asymmetrically distributed information for decision-making.”²⁴³ Anderson, writing in a modern democratic context, notes that for information to be aggregated and spread across a citizen body, individuals “need access to channels of communication with one another and government decision-makers,” as well as need to “follow norms that welcome or at least tolerate diversity and dissent.” For democracies to make use of these epistemic benefits, they must not only have legal and institutional structures, but also the cultural characteristics of “a way of life governed by cultural norms of equality, discussion, and tolerance of diversity.”²⁴⁴

It is not within the scope of my own project to fully evaluate the broad claims of these various epistemic conceptions of democracy. Many rely on statistical and probability driven-models or studies carried out in the modern day. My own contribution to the

²⁴¹ Anderson (2006): 13.

²⁴² Anderson (2006): 13.

²⁴³ Anderson (2006): 14.

²⁴⁴ Anderson (2006): 15.

subject will be limited to a subsection of the relationship between social interactions, political participation, and the spread of knowledge in Athens. However, modern scholars in the fields of classics and political science have sought to integrate modern thinking about epistemic democracy, institutions, and the spread of knowledge in order to better explain the functioning of Ancient Athens as a whole. Ober took on this task in his *Democracy and Knowledge*, which argued that Athens had a particularly “modern” approach to aggregating, aligning, and codifying knowledge that allowed for “Athenian exceptionalism,” and Athens’ “ability to outperform its rivals.”²⁴⁵ By using the limited statistical data remaining to modern scholars about ancient Greece, Ober argues that Athens was a success story in the ancient world—a *polis* that was bigger, wealthier, and had more institutional and cultural longevity than many of its neighbors²⁴⁶—not only because of its democratic institutions and culture, but because those institutions specifically sought to employ “*knowledge in action*,” by which Ober means “making information available for socially productive purposes through individual choices made in the context of institutional processes, and involving both innovation and learning.”²⁴⁷

Ober further narrows his subject of *knowledge in action* into a definition of “politically relevant knowledge” consisting of “people’s beliefs, capabilities, experience, and information, organized in ways that can be reproduced and shared within and among collectivities.” Such information “conjoins social/interpersonal and technical/expert forms

²⁴⁵ Ober (2008): 27.

²⁴⁶ To measure Athens’ success, Ober (2008) uses “Aggregate Flourishing” 43, “Distribution of coinage” 48, comparisons with Syracuse and Sparta 52, and citations in other Greek literature 53-54.

²⁴⁷ Ober (2008): 18.

of knowledge that are possessed by the organization as a whole (in the form of institutionalized processes and formal codes) and by individuals (both explicitly and latently).²⁴⁸ *Social knowledge* consists of knowledge of individuals, societal norms, institutions, and their characteristic practices—in a democratic community, it is necessary for participation in government and civic life, and is more or less broadly present in the political body. It includes knowledge of what individuals to trust, how one ought behave in public, and how to access political institutions.²⁴⁹ *Technical knowledge* accords more with the *technai* that so caught the interest of Plato’s Socrates. It is “specialized knowledge about how to use tools and processes to gain desired ends in a given domain of endeavor.” In contrast to social knowledge, there is likely to be only a limited number of true experts.²⁵⁰ Ober’s endorsement of such a view is not to agree with Plato that one cannot do more than one thing well—it is simply acknowledging that in a society there will be fewer people who are the best at their skill, and a great many more who are somewhere between expert and mediocre. The job of decision-making institutions in a context where information and expertise are dispersed is therefore to bring the two types of knowledge together, allowing a body of individuals of various levels of expertise to jointly possess a range of knowledge beyond what could be found in a limited group of experts.²⁵¹

Ober largely turns to formal Athenian political and institutional design to explain how Athens aggregated what Landemore had called the “collective distributed intelligence

²⁴⁸ Ober (2008): 91.

²⁴⁹ Ober (2008): 92.

²⁵⁰ Ober (2008): 92.

²⁵¹ Ober (2012): 121.

of the people.”²⁵² He focuses on the collegial magisterial boards, the assembly, and particularly the design of the Council of Five-Hundred, the agenda setting body for the Athenian assembly.²⁵³ However, in focusing on the macro-level structure of political institutions, I believe that Ober leaves some space in his interpretive theory for me to add to the nature of micro-level behaviors relating to the spread of knowledge and information in Athens. In one sense, Ober’s focus on deliberative and participatory institutions meets Anderson’s criteria for the two means non-market information may be spread in a democratic society: “votes and talk.” Strictly speaking, Athens’ institutions, particularly the Council of Five Hundred and the assembly, combined both institutionally. The council brought together a yearly cross-section of five hundred members of Athenian society. On the one hand it brought together a diverse group of citizens with respect to geography.²⁵⁴ At the same time this distribution was likely socioeconomically, and presumably epistemically, diverse. It was a group that would spend a yearlong role together that involved intensive debate, communal administration, and occasionally even living full-time

²⁵² Landemore (2008): 16.

²⁵³ For a thorough description of how the council—despite having a new set of members every year—was able to pool information from geographically diverse areas of Attica, institutionally learn and develop, as well as build ties between citizens from different regions, see Ober (2012).

²⁵⁴ Rhodes (1972): 4: The councilors were apportioned amongst the 139 demes of spread through Attica as a proportion of their size. Attica itself was a territory of over 2,500 km² according to Morris (2009): 109. According to my measurements from Trail (1975): Maps 1-3, 43 of the demes were within a 10km radius of the city, while the rest were farther, with the farthest ones being Rhamnous to the northwest (37km), Sunion to the southeast (40km), Oinoe to the East (33km). Migration to the city during the Peloponnesian war attested by Thucydides (Thuc. 2.14-16) might have changed that, but recent scholars like Rosivach (1993): 397-398 and Taylor (2011): 134 have challenged that fact, arguing that there was fluidity between city and country migration in the fifth and fourth centuries.

in the same space.²⁵⁵ The council was an institutional way for citizens to “talk,” as much as public debates of the assembly offered citizens the chance to “vote.”

If an epistemic democracy is one that thrives off of the collection, aggregation, and interest in useful information, while also requiring and incentivizing the participation of many citizens within different deliberative and participatory institutions to make that kind of information useful to the city, it seems that Athens, both on a *polis*-wide macro level, as well as on an individual level, is eerily similar to the two broad types of the πολυπράγμων. The first is the individual who is busy, restless, and inquisitive, seeking information for public or private gain. Yet, πολυπραγμοσύνη also seems to entail a doing of many things such as participating in multifarious deliberative bodies, and filling various social roles. Being active as a deliberator and a trader in the marketplace, a craftsperson and a gossip—these are a few of the ways that πολυπραγμοσύνη can represent a social or even hyper-social approach to Athenian public life. Even if such a figure was not always praised in Athenian literature, in evaluating Athens from the more removed standpoint of epistemic democratic theory, several of the more positive characteristics that the πολυπράγμων embodies seem to fit into the criteria that Ober sets out for ideal participants in epistemic decision making.

It is by expanding Anderson’s definition of “talk,” from her formulation of “votes and talk” that I hope to demonstrate the role and benefit of a positive πολυπράγμων in the epistemic marketplace of the social milieu of Athens. The individual who does many things, who frequents (and is notorious for always frequenting) public places, and has an interest

²⁵⁵ Hansen (1999): 254 notes that when one’s tribe was in their prytany, or administration of the council, one third of the tribe had to stay in the *Tholos*, the administrative building all day.

in the lives, experiences, and information of others, for whatever motivations, can serve an important role when one considers the ways information may be spread through social connections, networks, and “weak ties.” In this way, πολυπραγμοσύνη on the part of individual citizens (on the micro-level) serves as a crucial and necessary function *before* Ober’s and *after* institutional processes of knowledge aggregation. As was mentioned above, part of the problem experienced by a society like Athens, or any society that wishes to allow broad groups of non-experts to make decisions in non-hierarchical ways, is that necessary knowledge for forming, enacting, and evaluating government policy is incredibly varied.²⁵⁶ Michael Fuerstein, writing on this subject, doubts that there exists a Platonic-style higher-order knowledge or “*wisdom*” that could simply allow one to pool all of these epistemic categories to make good policy decisions, and instead argues that it is more likely for communities to employ a “division of cognitive labor.”²⁵⁷ Much like Ober argues that the highest levels of expertise may exist in society, but are dispersed, he argues that politically “relevant bits and clusters of knowledge are abundantly, though by no means completely, available in principle” throughout society.²⁵⁸ In a similar vein, even in a theoretically idealized participatory democratic scenario, it is not always the experts on a given subject who will be attending a given meeting where their expertise might be useful. In the Athenian council, assembly, magisterial boards, or courts, subjects under discussion

²⁵⁶ Fuerstein (2008): 76-77 notes that such knowledge includes that of (a) administrating government and procedurally passing legislation, (b) general knowledge of the various sciences, theories, and practices behind governance (everything from economics to epidemiology), (c) knowledge of how a particular policy will affect the lives of citizens, and (d) knowledge of how citizens believe policies will affect their lives.

²⁵⁷ Fuerstein (2008): 80.

²⁵⁸ Fuerstein (2008): 80.

might involve technical knowledge—such as shipbuilding for naval operations, building expenses or labor rates for individual artisans such as stonecutters and sculptors—as well as social knowledge, and knowledge about individuals—such as the citizenship status of an individual, or whether they were a slave or a *metic*—may not have always been immediately available to those on the governing body at the time.

More importantly, even information that we take for granted as being centralized and accessible in our day at various institutional levels of government or in the business world—such as citizenship listings, taxation brackets and information, or even trade and business listings—were not easily accessible, or in some cases, nonexistent. Athens, as was noted previously, was not a face-to-face society as some modern commentators have pictured it, and ancient sources such as Thucydides and Isocrates make reference to that fact.²⁵⁹ However, certain institutional information was not centralized either, such as a list of who was and was not a citizen in Athens. Such information was physically dispersed amongst the demes of Attica, most of which were well away from the city center, inscribed in a deme register.²⁶⁰ Institutionally, to be a citizen of Athens, and to participate in the institutions located in the city center, one had to be first inscribed as a member of a

²⁵⁹ Cohen (2004): 105-106: “A society characterized by murky and complex multidimensional social affiliations and arrangements that were continually being modified by internal demographic mobility and by extensive immigration and emigration, Athens was not a ‘face-to-face’ community—not on a *polis* wide scale, and not within its demes...” Thuc. 8.66 notes that the oligarchic revolution of the Four Hundred was made possible because the size of the city and the prominence of the conspirators seemed to exaggerate the power of the oligarchic sentiment; Isoc. 15.172 comments on the size and lack of interpersonal knowledge between individual citizens.

²⁶⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 42.1.

deme.²⁶¹ Such information was therefore not centrally located, and more often than not was procured through social means. While Whitehead notes that the “*demesman as witness*” was a common trope in Athenian court oratory, what is less known or explored are the mechanisms by which a defendant or prosecutor acquired their information on their legal adversaries.²⁶² Particularly through proceedings in court cases that involved prosecutions over false citizenship, a prosecutor would most likely have to come in contact with, and inquire for information from, smaller and diverse communities within Athens (namely, demesmen of another tribe) that they were not familiar with or only know peripherally. Such activity might be the only possible way with which to bring a case, be it legitimate or not; yet, following the literary depictions set out by the first two chapters, such activity could also result in being branded as a πολυπράγμων.

One way to theoretically consider the spread of information by individuals between discrete locations and clusters of knowledge in any given large (particularly non-face-to-face) community is through the mechanism of “weak ties,” identified by the sociologist Mark Granovetter. Granovetter argued that in contrast to what might be commonly assumed, weak interpersonal social ties might actually be more effective for spreading useful information to a broader community of individuals or inquirers than strong ones. Defining the strength of a tie is largely intuitive—it is a “combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.”²⁶³ Stronger ties imply more, frequent, and regular contact

²⁶¹ Whitehead (1986): 97.

²⁶² Whitehead (1986): 227.

²⁶³ Granovetter (1973): 1361.

between individuals, while weak ties imply less contact and regularity. Most individuals are situated at the center of a network of strong social ties such as family members, friends, and daily coworkers. Additionally, there is a mathematically high chance that your own strong ties will have strong, or at least weak ties to each other.²⁶⁴ Such ties are crucial to anyone. Considering them instrumentally, they provide greater support and are often more easily available.²⁶⁵ However, when considering such ties in the context of the spread of ideas, innovations, and information, a network that is dominated by strong ties will be seemingly paradoxically worse at providing those within it with new information. Granovetter uses the example of the spread of a rumor in a high-density strong tie network. If all of the individuals tell the rumor to their strong ties, it is more likely that they will be telling the rumors multiple times to the same people, and because one's own strong ties are likely to have ties to each other, the rumor is less likely to leave the clique.²⁶⁶

On the other hand, weak ties, infrequent connections, acquaintances, and other less immediate social contacts are more useful for sharing dispersed information because of their function as "bridges" between different social groups and discrete strong-tie clusters in a society. In Granovetter's description, a bridge is the tie "in a network which provides the *only* path between two points."²⁶⁷ When thinking about the dispersal of knowledge and

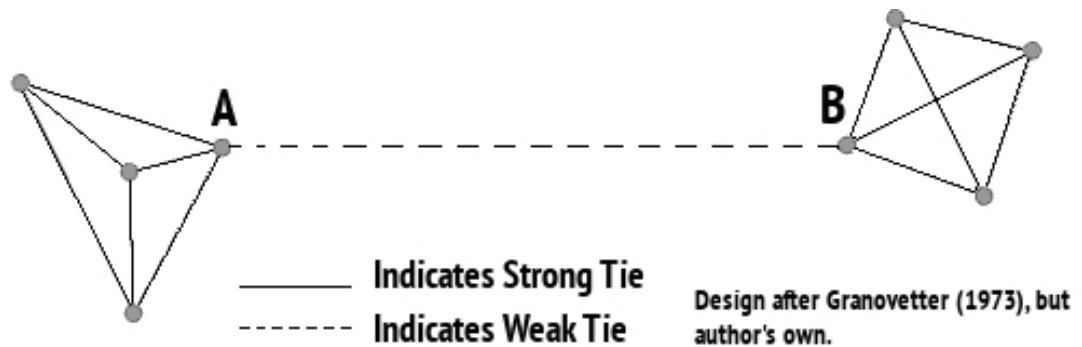
²⁶⁴ Granovetter (1973): 1362 uses the example: "If A-B and A-C ties exist, then the amount of time C spends with B depends (in part) on the amount A spends with B and C, respectively. (If the events "A is with B" and "A is with C" were independent, then the event "C is with A and B" would have probability equal to the product of their probabilities. For example, if A and B are together 60% of the time, and A and C 40%, then C, A, and B would be together 24% of the time. Such independence would be less likely after than before B and C became acquainted.)"

²⁶⁵ Granovetter (1983): 209.

²⁶⁶ Granovetter (1973): 1366.

²⁶⁷ Granovetter (1973): 1364.

information in a large network, the bridge is the most logical and efficient way for information to spread between two discrete groups. Bridges are less likely to exist in groups dominated by strong ties, because, as was said before, the weak ties are still more likely to be between individuals generally in the same social sphere, rather than with of groups outside of it. Therefore, not all weak ties are bridges, but all bridges are weak ties.²⁶⁸ In some cases, the bridging tie is not the only theoretical way that information may travel between social groups. However, it is often the most likely.



Weak ties are important in terms of thinking about knowledge and the travel of knowledge because if a weak tie is a bridge, and it is the only way that social group A has any connection to social group B, it means that two distinct (and possibly epistemically diverse) groups who would have no connection to each other otherwise now have a means of sharing information with each other specifically through the individuals at both ends of the bridge.²⁶⁹ According to Granovetter, “individuals with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will be confined to the provincial

²⁶⁸ Granovetter (1973): 1364. Granovetter notes that the possibility of a strong tie being the only connection between two individuals is likely only in a small community. The probability is low that B and C do not have (or do not develop) a connection independent (weak or strong) of A if strong ties exist between A-C and A-B.

²⁶⁹ Although I am thinking about this in the context of the dissemination of knowledge, norms, and ideas, such social clusters could differ from each other in a variety of characteristics.

news and views of their close friends.”²⁷⁰ One of the most cited and empirically tested aspects of Granovetter’s thought is his claim that people are more likely to discover and receive information about job prospects through weak ties rather than strong ties.²⁷¹ Such ties therefore are not only passive conductors of cultural symbols and ideas, and general news, but also information that can be useful in an immediate and instrumental way.²⁷² The more weak “bridging” ties that an individual has, the more likely it is that they will have access to new innovations, norms, and information coming from the different groups. Weak ties offer a social mechanism through which one might be able to satisfy Ober’s and Fuerstein’s desires to see differentiated and dispersed clusters of technical, expert, and social knowledge interact across a society.

The question might be asked as to why individuals should seek out these kinds of weak ties and the new kinds of information embodied in them, just as an Athenian citizen might ask the question Socrates asks of himself at the trial, “Why do you meddle?” (πολυπραγμονεῖς)²⁷³ These kinds of bridging ties can be useful for gathering and receiving information in an instrumental way—particular to solving certain specific problems, but from another modern perspective, they also allow individuals to benefit from the perspective of accumulating social capital. In the words of Roland Burt, social capital refers to the “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action.” However, social

²⁷⁰ Granovetter (1983): 202.

²⁷¹ Granovetter (1983): 205.

²⁷² Granovetter (1983): 214.

²⁷³ Pl. *Ap.* 31c. “ἴσως ἂν οὖν δόξειεν ἄτοπον εἶναι, ὅτι δὴ ἐγὼ ἰδίᾳ μὲν ταῦτα συμβουλεύω περιῶν καὶ πολυπραγμονῶ,” saying, “perhaps it may seem strange that I go about and interfere in other people’s affairs to give this advice in private.”

capital can also be framed as the benefit one may have from occupying a certain space in a network or social structure.²⁷⁴ As Burt notes, “Certain people or certain groups are connected to certain others, trusting certain others, obligated to support certain others, dependent on exchange with certain others. Holding a certain position in the structure of these exchanges can be an asset in its own right.”²⁷⁵ Building off of Granovetter, he argues that weak bridging ties represent “structural holes” between differing groups in society, which creates a competitive advantage for the individual who is on one side of the hole. By being the sole receptor of information via the weak tie, this individual has “an advantage with respect to information access,” and is therefore incentivized to make a broad diversity of contacts, in order to “have a hand in, and exercise control over more rewarding opportunities.”²⁷⁶ Cultivating and taking advantage of such ties is not something everyone does, or is even in the position to do. However, Burt characterizes such individuals who do make use of this kind of information and social position in a network as having an entrepreneurial character—his research and empirical studies link those who take advantage of such holes as being more creative and innovative. He, like Granovetter, seeks to empirically link increased performance and innovative potential with networks that span weak ties, as compared to strong tie networks.²⁷⁷

The question to be raised is how such weak tie networks come into being. One way that Ober connects the development of weak ties and this kind of social entrepreneurial spirit in Athens is to consider it in an institutional sense. He sees the Council of Five

²⁷⁴ Burt (2000): 348.

²⁷⁵ Burt (2000): 347.

²⁷⁶ Burt (2000): 354, also 355.

²⁷⁷ Burt (2000): 407.

Hundred (especially in its inception in 508/507 B.C., when Athens was socially reorganized by Cleisthenes, and few people knew each other from other demes) as a source of initiation of such weak ties—individuals were brought from all over Attica into close contact with each other for extended periods of time.²⁷⁸ There they developed contacts, exchanged information, and, hypothetically, created weak bridging ties between the strong-tie networks of the demes in the form of the councilors who attended in a given year.²⁷⁹ However, another specifically non-institutional example favored by modern social scientists is the example of participation in civic and private associations that allow individuals to develop weak ties. Robert Putnam, who largely focuses on the role of civic life and social capital in the modern United States, argues that associating in groups in civil society is a way to both build weak ties and strong ties.

Putnam’s conception of social capital and its benefits are broad. In fact, his work has been criticized for being a “catch-all” concept of community life.²⁸⁰ It is associated not only with advantages gained to individuals through networks, but also greater social cohesion, the promotion of common norms, and individual trust, simultaneously a public and private good.²⁸¹ Putnam, writing in the tradition of previous thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville about modern liberal representative democracy—rather than participatory

²⁷⁸ *Ath. Pol.* 21.3-4 saw the Cleisthenic reorganization of demes into tribes that included equally the three geographic areas of the coast, the plains, and the uplands as being specifically for mixing the population up together. The author of *Ath. Pol.*’s narrative sees such a division as breaking the geographic divisions embodied by the factional strife represented by Megacles, Lycurgus, and the tyrant Peisistratus; Kierstead (2013): 121-122 seeks to make the current academic orthodoxy more nuanced—he believes that Cleisthenes did not seek to disrupt or replace old ties between demes and tribes, but simply supplemented them with *more* ties.

²⁷⁹ Ober (2008): 127.

²⁸⁰ Kierstead (2013): 24.

²⁸¹ Putnam (2000): 20.

direct democracy in the ancient style—sees the presence and prominence of such associations as being crucial to the health of a democratic system.²⁸² Such associations discussed by de Tocqueville and Putnam are voluntary, are secondary associations (meaning not family and friends), and are characterized by horizontal relations.²⁸³ That is, they are largely non-hierarchical and egalitarian, and in that way, reflective of the democratic society around them.²⁸⁴

In the Classics, James Kierstead and Nicholas Jones have recently done work on the associations of classical Athens, and both writers focus largely on the “internally ordered segments of public organization” as represented by the demes, phratries, and phyles.²⁸⁵ Such organizations had institutional functions in Athens and cannot be considered purely voluntary in the modern sense. Membership in one of the demes was both inherited from birth (with some exceptions) and had a number of institutional functions attached to it. To be selected by lot for many citywide offices, candidates had to present themselves to be picked by lot at their phratry (or tribal) assembly, having been screened by their fellow demesmen first.²⁸⁶ Ober had identified the demes as sources of strong ties amongst the city,

²⁸² de Tocqueville (2002): 489-500 for some of Tocqueville’s thought on the importance of associations to American society, as well as democratic societies in general.

²⁸³ Warren (2001): 29.

²⁸⁴ Putnam (2000): 339 sees certain associations “as places where social and civic skills are learned—‘schools for democracy’”; de Tocqueville (2002): 490 announces that in democratic societies, “all citizens are independent and weak; they can do almost nothing by themselves, and none of them can oblige those like themselves to lend them their cooperation. They therefore all fall into impotence if they do not learn to aid each other freely.”

²⁸⁵ Jones (1999): 3-4; Kierstead (2013): 290: “I chose to focus on two mechanisms. The first is the construction of solidarity in the demes, and the second concerns the policing of citizenship boundaries by a series of associations.”

²⁸⁶ Whitehead (1983): 276-278.

and saw the tribal contingents in the council of Five Hundred as a generator of weak ties from the perspective of individual non-institutional behavior.²⁸⁷ These are part of the institutional framework of Athen's public organization, and not a response to or crafted by individual behavior. For most citizens, being a member of a deme, phratry, or phyle was not a choice, it was a reality of being a citizen—in fact, because most of these bodies were closed to the citizenry, it can be argued that they lack a major source of weak ties—interaction with *metics* and slaves (freed and unfreed), who formed a sizeable part of the population of Athens.²⁸⁸

Instead, I turn to some of the types of associations that Jones classifies as similar to voluntary organizations of the present day (meaning one did not have to be a citizen to join, and they were not included in the public structure of Athens' internal organization).²⁸⁹ Voluntary organizations such as dining-clubs, religious associations, sailor's associations, brotherhoods and priesthoods, and business partnerships, all existed in Athens to some degree, although our evidence for them is limited, by all accounts.²⁹⁰ Religious organizations are particularly seen as developing ties between diverse members of a community—Clare Taylor notes in a study of certain fourth-century religious Attic inscriptional dedications that men, women, and slaves all contributed to and could be

²⁸⁷ Ober (2008): 127.

²⁸⁸ Akrigg (2015): 157-158 notes that a total number of *metics* in Athens is elusive, but that it was a sizeable population. Many *metics* were “economic migrants,” but there were undoubtedly a large number of free slaves who stayed in the city and achieved *metic* status after achieving freedom. Akrigg uses this to argue that it is hard to speak of one distinct *metic* community or experience.

²⁸⁹ Jones (1999): 3-4.

²⁹⁰ Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1160a. Jones (1999): 4 notes that “the closest that the classical period comes to a worker's guild is a single unilluminating dedication by a number of servile or freed fullers.”

named together on group dedications.²⁹¹ Some associations were obviously not cross-cutting or bridging, and represent strong ties, such as the *hetairia*, usually translated as association, company, or group, which often refers to “private societies of upper-class males devoted to purely social activity amongst themselves.”²⁹² Kierstead particularly points to the philosophical schools as being an example of an open, relatively cross-cutting associational structure that might have found replication in other aspects of Athenian life. According to Kierstead, the “location and origins of the philosophical schools fed into their character in the fourth century as open, dynamic institutions with permeable boundaries with the rest of the Athenian polis.”²⁹³ As I had previously mentioned, much of the earliest discourse between intellectuals in Athens (such as Socrates) happened in the public areas of the agora. However, even after his death, some of the schools, such as the eponymous Stoics and the Cynics also frequented public *stoai* and buildings in the agora, Athens’ most frequented and highly visible location.²⁹⁴ The gymnasia to which the later philosophical schools moved to (Antisthenes taught in the Kynosarges, Plato in the Academy, Aristotle in the Lyceum) were indeed farther out from the city center as to not automatically include the passerby in a given debate, yet, the gymnasia were indeed public spaces, and philosophic attendants are at least anecdotally known to have been more diverse than

²⁹¹ Taylor (2015): 43: “Onomastic analysis suggests that the people commemorated here included citizens and non-citizens, men and women, and perhaps slave and free. However, citizenship status is never explicitly stated on these dedications, which implies that distinguishing between these groups was unimportant in this context.”

²⁹² Jones (1999): 223.

²⁹³ Kierstead (2013): 214.

²⁹⁴ Jones (1999): 230.

solely the sons of aristocratic men who typically exercised there.²⁹⁵ Plato himself taught for free—the only expense of attending for a lower-class citizen was remuneration for his (or her) lost wages for attendance. *Metics* were obviously allowed—the founder of the Lyceum school, Aristotle himself, was a *metic*.²⁹⁶

There is evidence then, albeit slim, that associations which were voluntary and not associated with citizenship had the ability to have members of groups from many different areas of society. The philosophical schools offer a particular nexus of individuals who associate and spend time together, but are not particularly bound or divided from each other by ties of class, wealth or citizen status. Other associations for which we have little to no surviving evidence (possibly due to the fact that many of them would have belonged to lower-class individuals, for whom our surviving literary or physical evidence is truly scarce) such as the worker's organizations, business partnerships, and sailor's associations mentioned in Aristotle and other banauic trade guilds and associations could have been a source of at least weak ties between individuals who are neither of the same citizenship status, nor of the same deme or phratry.²⁹⁷ Trade organizations probably would not have crosscut divides of a socioeconomic nature, although they certainly might have cut across the *metic*-citizen divide. As Taylor noted, religious and cultic organizations seem to demonstrate a greater probability of being a location where a dedicated social

²⁹⁵ Jones (1999): 233; Kierstead (2013): 215.

²⁹⁶ Diog. Laert. 4.1 notes that Speusippus, Plato's first successor as head of the Academy, was criticized for introducing a fee to attend, which Plato was said to have not endorsed. Diog. Laert. 3.46 notes several women studying at the Academy during Speusippus's time. Kierstead (2013): 216.

²⁹⁷ Vlassopoulos (2007): 34 particularly speaks to the belief that modern scholars have "undervalued the importance of the non-agricultural population in classical Athens."

entrepreneur of the type that Burt envisioned could have gathered and employed useful information and contacts. Due to the paucity of evidence, it is hard to make a firm argument on the subject, but these types of associations (in theory) offered individuals the possibility to accumulate ties, and therefore, knowledge, from different parts of the social spectrum.

As I have argued, I believe that associations could have served as *one* of the loci for developing bridging paths for information and ideas, and weak ties in society. However, the modern focus on individual association also seems to come out of concerns within societies that are larger and greater distance (physical and institutional) between the individual, their neighbors, and their government. Tocqueville, who inspires much of modern theory on democracy and associations, had a fear that individuals in modern representative democracies—who did not have the ability to wield power or govern themselves—would become atomized and isolated from their fellow citizens, and eaten up in their own concerns.²⁹⁸ If my review of the subject of πολυπραγμοσύνη has shown anything, those who wrote about and criticized democracy in Athens—the thinkers who have influenced the way individuals like Tocqueville and more modern political theorists consider our brand of liberal and representative democracy—believed that democratic government (not just voting, but office holding, as well) was too participatory, too frequent, and too ingrained in

²⁹⁸ de Tocqueville (2002): 482-484 called this phenomenon individualism, an excess of which, he argued, would lead to a disengagement of citizens from political life and lead them open to a democratic despotism of administration, detailed on 661-673 in a section called “What kind of despotism democratic nations have to fear.”

popular culture.²⁹⁹ Additionally, the fact that πολυπραγμοσύνη seems even to be a word with purchase in Athenian discourse implies that rather than a fear that citizens were too fragmented, too atomized, and uninvolved with each other's lives, it might have been the opposite, at least in the eyes of conservative theorists like Plato. Strong and prominent associational life might have been a key part of that.

It is true that Athens was not a face-to-face society, and not a πόλις εὐσύνοπτος as Aristotle defined it, a city with a population that could be taken in in one view.³⁰⁰ Such a definition was crucial to my argument as to how information (and authority) was dispersed and decentralized, making information spread by individuals to be necessary and also beneficial for the *polis*, as well as for the individual spreading it. The territory of Attica was large, and individuals could not have conceivably known each other all socially or by their faces.³⁰¹ Yet, given that fact, the facilitation of knowledge and weak ties between the citizen body would still have been aided by what Ober calls the “interpresence” and “intervisibility” of individuals and information in specific spaces in the city.³⁰² I already

²⁹⁹ By “ours,” I mean American democracy, the context in which I am studying and writing this thesis. My apologies for the provincialism to readers from outside of the United States.

³⁰⁰ Vlassopoulos (2007): 36 for the identification of those two concepts as the same; Arist. *Pol.* 1327a for the size of the ideal *polis* as being one where “τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐσύνοπτον ἔφαμεν εἶναι δεῖν”.

³⁰¹ This is certainly true given that Akrigg (2011): 57 notes that some commentators have put the number of male citizens along at near 60,000 before the war Peloponnesian War, and 25-30,000 afterwards.

³⁰² Ober (2008): 192: Common knowledge is not just a matter of passively “taking up” a particular message; it is an active social experience. Personal interpresence and especially intervisibility among interpresent individuals create a particularly effective environment for building common knowledge because each participant can personally observe not only that others know some piece of information in common, but how others respond to that information.”

brought this up with a review of the differing types of activities that could be done in the agora, but it is worth highlighting again. The diverse set of activities that occurred in “free spaces” like the agora—a fact of life that conservative critics bewailed, and Plato’s *poleis* legislated against—add to their nature as social and recreational spaces, as well as political and economic. Demosthenes—albeit in a rhetorical attempt to portray one of his opponents as an anti-social outsider—noted the centrality of the agora to all the citizens’ lives when he stated that out of the approximately twenty-thousand Athenians, every single one of them frequents the marketplace on public or private business (Dem 25.21). The speaker seeks to use a rhetorically constructed fiction of the face-to-face character of Athens to convince his fellow jurors that his opponent, Aristogeiton, does not do any of the things that Athenians are typically said to do. Aristogeiton, in the speaker’s view, is not only different from the Athenians because he does not spend time in the agora for official business, but also for a lack of social interactions that presumably go hand in hand with the agora. He is critiqued for not taking part in philanthropic or personal associations, but also for neither calling at any of the barbershops in the city nor the workshops (Dem 25.22).

By recurrently frequenting spaces like the agora, individuals gained a set of casual contacts—often changing, and often new—which are somewhere between strong ties and anonymity. As was mentioned at the end of the last chapter as an example of polypragmatic figures, the *πολυπραγμοσύνη* of such caricatured characters of Theophrastus could also offer examples (albeit comedic) of how individuals are able to generate weak ties simply by the interpresence of individuals in the city center. The “garrulous man” is one who sits down and speaks to someone he does not know (Thphr. *Char.* 3). The rustic figure will ask the first person he sees for information on entering the

city (Theophr. *Char.* 4). The chatty individual will seek to spread the news of the assembly meeting once he has learned of it (Theophr. *Char.* 7). Both the chat and the gossip are enabled by the social nature of the agora and other associated spaces, such as workshops and porches of buildings (Theophr. *Char.* 8). Large and open public spaces, such as inward-facing agorai and theaters, were not unique to Athenian architecture, but it could be argued that they particularly amplified the effects of intervisibility and interpresence in Athenian political and cultural life.³⁰³ Individuals in Athens shared the same *palaestra* and *gymnasia*, and sat together—all visible to one another—at the same theaters. Such interpresence does not immediately create ties of any kind between individuals—but it certainly offers entrepreneurial individuals the possibility for such.

One example of the relationship of social interaction, interpresence, information, and knowledge, is the oft-cited example of the monument of Eponymous Heroes in the agora, where much official information—such as the agenda of the assembly, notifications about upcoming trials, new laws to be approved, and extraordinary or emergency meetings—would be posted in writing on wooden boards in advance of assemblies, trials, and tribal events.³⁰⁴ There are several ways to think about the relationship of the Eponymous Heroes—a method of official dissemination of information—to the social flow of information. One would be to consider it, as does Camp, a “crucial element in the dissemination of official information and yet another reason why the average citizen who lived in the city itself would have occasion to visit the agora almost every day.”³⁰⁵ In theory,

³⁰³ Ober (2008): 199.

³⁰⁴ Camp (1992): 99.

³⁰⁵ Camp (1992): 99.

coming to the monument and reading the notices there would require no social interaction at all. Most of the citizens (who, if we are to believe Demosthenes' exaggerated take on the situation) would pass by the agora for some reason or another, and they could check the monument, and consider themselves informed. Indeed, Athens was particularly known for its "epigraphic habit" of posting laws, inscribed documents, and official lists on *stelai* in public spaces, on buildings, or in frequently habited religious sites. Such information is fixed, visible, and not particularly social in its means of transmission.³⁰⁶ The jury may always be out regarding the question of whether all Athenians could read.³⁰⁷ If Athenian literacy was high, then the relationship of epigraphy and posted information is less germane to this argument. If, on the other hand, there was a mixture of literate, non-literate, and semi-literate individuals in Athens, the social nature of knowledge becomes a factor.

Rosalind Thomas argues that Athenian culture was primarily an oral culture—a distinction that is different from literate and non-literate cultures—that prioritized the

³⁰⁶ Hedrick (1999): 389 takes the term "epigraphical habit" from an article by Ramsay MacMullen; he uses it to simply mean the practice of erecting inscriptions. Various uses for erecting monumental writing under a democracy include: functional accountability and publication of the "people's business" (397), the ideological aspect of promoting and enshrining democratic values (425), and purely informational, enabling individuals to have effective knowledge of politics as well demonstrating what laws to observe (425-6).

³⁰⁷ For a limited set of individuals participating in a "literate culture" of recreational reading and writing, and perhaps a larger group of semi-literates and functional literates see Harris (1989) and Morgan (1999) who argued that lack of literacy impaired the ability of certain individuals to participate in Athens' democratic processes. Incidentally, Harris also argues for a lower amount of people participating in Athens' democracy than most others. Missiou (2011) argues for a high level of literacy in Athens, given the assumptions that many lower class individuals (*thetes*) participated, and that many of the functions of Athenian government required writing of some kind.

spread of information through speech and pronouncement.³⁰⁸ In her view, even knowledge and material that was written (such as the Homeric poems) was often meant to be spoken aloud by individuals, a conception which perhaps allows for the easy coexistence of those functionally literate (in terms of literate culture) and those semi- or illiterate participating in government. In light of that theory, one way to think about the social nature of knowledge affecting how Athenian citizens gained information—even if they were illiterate or only semi-literate—is through the basic social fact of simply being present in the same space as another individual at the same time. Illiterate individuals could have had passerby or fellow onlookers read out the notices on the monument of Eponymous Heroes to them. Demosthenes notes that Athenians were commonly to be found running around asking each other “what’s the news?” (Dem. 4.10).³⁰⁹ He also notes that news announced officially at places like the council could be spread socially by individuals through the workshops of the agora even before any herald had announced it or posted it officially.³¹⁰ To return to Theophrastus’ portraits, the chat and the gossip seem to be likely candidates. To think of the spread of information beyond the weakest of these “weak ties,” such as the ones generated between readers, non-readers, and passersby at a public monument in Athens, one can consider as evidence the offhand comment of Theophrastus’s account of the rustic who asks for news from whomever he might meet, as well as telling all of the news of the

³⁰⁸ Thomas (1989): 15: “In fact the society of classical Athens was still heavily dependent on the spoken word even in the fourth century B.C.” She further notes “We must extend discussion of literacy to the ‘mixture’ and interaction of literate and oral processes” (16).

³⁰⁹ Lewis (1995): 433.

³¹⁰ Dem. 18.169 describes the councilors on evening duty in the *Tholos* upon hearing of the fall of Elatea as having immediately left and spread the news in the workshops so effectively that by the next morning, the citizens were assembled on the Pnyx before the Council had even introduced the agenda.

events at the assembly to his workers on his farm. In this case, the comedy of the situation perhaps comes from the fact that the workers on his farm could have been slaves or *metics*, or even poorer citizen workers who had no ability (due to lack of remuneration or a lack of rights) to go to the assembly in the city. One can certainly see the idea of strong ties as embodied by the farmer's connection with the workers (or more broadly, those that live nearby in his locality), as well as the weak ties present in the contacts that might be made when in the city and the agora, even if the visits are infrequent at best.³¹¹ Even if infrequent, such visits of rural-to-urban citizens may develop connections, as they are not irregular but often scheduled. Visits by rural dwellers to the city center might occur on a regular basis, scheduled with certain market days when individuals could be expected in the city, or timed with the four-times-a-prytany regular assembly meeting. For example, Lysias mentions specifically that the Plataeans (both urban and rural dwellers) would meet together at the fresh-cheese market on the last day of every month (Lys, 23.6). For the individual who lives outside the city, it is not only the information that is spread via official means at the assembly meeting itself, or at the Eponymous Heroes, that might have value, it is the information that a rural demesperson too might gain from socially calling at a barbershop or a workshop while stopping in the city.

The weak ties and associational contacts developed by the *πολυπράγμων* by virtue of their interpresence and intervisibility in the common spaces of the city are not only useful for accumulating and accessing *politically* useful knowledge from *social* sources. They

³¹¹ Jones (2004): 274: "But these exchanges tended to be periodic, and periodic at wide intervals—from the four-times-per-prytany meeting of the assembly, to seasonal visits to market, to the annual phratric Apatouria, to the once-in-a-lifetime ephebic training and tour of Attica."

are also useful in developing purely social knowledge, particularly of people and characteristic social practices. Although the discussion of weak ties above had focused on how individuals access knowledge *from* other individuals, the kind of behavior exhibited by the πολυπράγμων is also important for permitting the conditions to develop knowledge of individuals, and particularly, knowledge of whom one should trust and distrust.³¹² Modern theorists of social capital and democratic governance seize on the concept of social trust and trustworthiness—joint knowledge of and respect for communal norms of behavior between members of a society³¹³—as being crucial to developing the kind of “generalized reciprocity” and “generalized trust” that helps to “build large scale, complex, and interdependent social networks and institutions.”³¹⁴

Some scholars doubt that generalized reciprocity and personal trust existed between social groups and outside of personal “strong tie” relationships in Athens. Matthew Christ has in fact argued that if an ethos of Athenian reciprocity (what he calls “helping behavior”) did exist, it was considered more in the relationship between the citizen and the state, rather than in a citizen/citizen context.³¹⁵ It is not my goal to overturn that argument. Yet, a crucial part of developing any type of trust amongst members of a society—whether it is thin and generalized to a whole society, or thick and particular to a given social group—is increased knowledge of whether individuals hold

³¹² Ober (2008): 91 claims that social knowledge “includes answers to questions like these: Who is my friend/foe? Whom should I trust/distrust and under what circumstances?”

³¹³ Fukayama 1995: 26: “Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community.”

³¹⁴ Putnam (2000): 135 uses the term “generalized reciprocity”; Warren (1999): 9 uses “generalized trust”.

³¹⁵ Christ (2010): 285.

themselves to similar norms and standards of social interaction. The more time that an individual spends with the marginal figures in one's social networks (those who eventually become "weak ties") the more they will have knowledge of whether they are able to trust those individuals. In Athens, as in the modern day, the implications of such knowledge could be economic, such as a means of facilitating business relations; Millett notes that the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* states that "no man makes a deposit with a man he does not trust" (Arist. *Pr.* 950a28).³¹⁶ Yet, in an environment of direct democracy—where citizens would often debate and craft policy alongside the individuals that they saw in the marketplace or at the barbershop—establishing whether an individual's opinion is trustworthy is a crucial part of deciding whether to be persuaded by their arguments in the assembly or council-chamber. Knowledge of an individual's reputation, personality, and technical experiences could indeed be politically useful as part of judging policymaking in an environment where all citizens had a hand in governance.

It is by looking at the ways in which the movement and accumulation of knowledge by individuals occurs on ground level, on the street level, and at the level of the individual citizen, rather than simply at the institutional level that one begins to finally complete the fourth category that I had seen as lacking in my chapter—a praise of a kind of positive polypragmatic democratic behavior in Athens. In this section I have sought to build a theoretical basis for considering the behaviors of the πολυπράγμων, and in such a way consider individual (and often, non-elite) citizen behavior from beyond the rhetoric-laden portrayals of the orators and the caricatures of the comedians. In a situation where

³¹⁶ Translation and attribution to the peripatetic school that followed Aristotle comes from Millett (2002): 99.

information, expertise, and “politically relevant knowledge” is not centralized or easily accessible by individuals means the behaviors described negatively as πολυπραγμοσύνη actually become an asset to the citizen, rather than something to be berated (in the orators) or proscribed (as in Plato).

I particularly connected Plato’s abolishment of πολυπραγμοσύνη—of doing many things and functions not proper to one’s role—in the *Republic* and (albeit without using the term) in the *Laws* with the active, restless, innovative, and toilsome seekers of information that come from the negative portraits of the behaviors in popular rhetoric and comedy. Plato’s broader epistemic critique of Athenian democracy—of how democracy was, in his mind, a clearly inferior form of government due to a lack of information and expertise on the part of mass decision-making bodies staffed by part-time citizen-rulers—led me in turn to investigate ways that modern democratic theorists have sought to explain the virtues and weaknesses of participatory democracy, particularly in its ability to generate and marshal information and individual expertise effectively for use by the citizen body as a whole. The concept raised by some of these scholars—that knowledge is embedded and dispersed throughout society, and can be organized through not only institutions, but through social relations as well—seemed to be particularly applicable to the Athenian situation, and was one that seemed to give great agency as well as benefits to the individual who acted as did a πολυπράγμων. By introducing Granovetter’s theories of weak ties, and Burt and Putnam’s concepts of social capital, I have laid out the theoretical foundations for, first, one of the ways that modern theorists consider that dispersed information can be spread throughout a society, and, second, how (from both a situational and incentive perspective) such ties can come into being. Finally, I hope to have more fully explicated the

ideas that I had teased at when discussing the rigidity of Plato's spatial and social construction of the city of Magnesia in the *Laws*. The ways in which the structure of the Athenian agora and other public spaces in the city fostered interpresence, intervisibility, and social interactions also simultaneously fostered the conditions necessary for the creation of "weak ties" and acquaintance networks that allowed ordinary citizens to gain access to socially-embedded information through social means, rather than institutional ones. The *Republic* had explicitly abolished πολυπραγμοσύνη as an institutional and political phenomenon by removing from positions of power those who were not capable of good rule. On the other hand, the rigidity of the *Laws* rendered moot the processes that enabled the social aspects of πολυπραγμοσύνη and many other typical Athenian social interactions, reorganizing citizen life so as to limit the associative freedom between castes and classes (such as between citizens, banausic tradespeople, and *metics*) and to severely diminish the open and freewheeling nature of the "free spaces" of the city. The fact that Plato takes aim not only at the direct manifestation of popular rule, but also the behaviors that I have determined to be crucial in spreading information through that populous and non-elite citizen body, is telling.

Josiah Ober has made a persuasive argument that the structure of Athenian political institutions such as the Council of Five Hundred and the Assembly were crucial in aggregating the dispersed knowledge of the Athenian population and bringing it to bear on complex issues of decision-making. Institutions like the Council and the Assembly not only gathered information, but they disseminated it to the rest of the population as well. Common experiences of governing and working closely with others on committees, boards, and in the Council not only gave the Athenians access to the specific technical knowledge

of their fellow citizens, but also “social knowledge,” knowledge of individuals, norms, procedures, and activity of actual governance. In this way, he seeks to combat Plato’s claim that the Athenians were amateurs and incompetents—in his reading they were frequent fliers in the art of self-governance. In this chapter, in complement rather than in contradiction to Ober’s efforts, I have sought to understand how certain knowledge in a democracy may be spread by purely social means. I assert that the figure of the πολυπράγμων in Athenian literature was especially representative of such an environment where knowledge is socially embedded and dispersed. I also hope to have argued that the social behaviors pilloried by the orators and comedians as πολυπραγμοσύνη were neither purely anti-social behaviors limited to a small group of the population, but instead, as Thucydides and Plato presented it, attributes of Athenian social life in general. In studying the πολυπράγμων in light of some modern social science theories, I hope to have contested, or at least complicated Plato’s assertion of what is valid political knowledge in a politically useful context. It is not only that the information, expertise, and talk between members of the *banausoi* at Athens does not have any validity in Plato’s epistemic conception of good governance—he also actively seeks to minimize those kind of informal social institutions of “talking” altogether in his ideal states.

Conclusion

I would like to end this paper by focusing on several points made by Aristotle. Aristotle, like Plato, was a critic of the mix of business, politics, and social engagement that occurred in the agora.³¹⁷ Aristotle too rated Athens very poorly in the gradients of democracy that he laid out in the *Politics*. Notably, his first form of democracy, the most moderate and ideal one (Arist. *Pol.* 1291b30-40), is one where the majority will be composed of farmers. Aristotle makes the direct political claim that Aristophanes and Euripides only hint at when they had praised the ἀπραγμοσύνη of the rural farmer in my first chapter: if they have to work for a living, they will have little leisure and will therefore hold few assemblies, and the laws, rather than the people, will rule.³¹⁸ Such a regime lacks the characteristics of πολυπραγμοσύνη characterized by Plato, while also being very different from the Athenian regime. On the other hand, Aristotle's "final democracy" (τελευταία δημοκρατία), the most degraded and socially unstable form of democratic government, involved rule by all of the citizens in mass bodies, with magistrates solely executing the decrees rather than deciding them (Arist. *Pol.* 1298a28-30).³¹⁹ Such democracies include the *banausoi*, the artisans, laborers and craftsmen amongst their magistrates and assemblymen (Arist. *Pol.* 1277b). Numerous authors have commented on the similarities to this final form

³¹⁷ Vlassopoulos (2007): 40; Arist. *Pol.* 1331a-b calls for the establishment of separate agorai for business, politics, and leisure in the manner of the Thessalians.

³¹⁸ Arist. *Pol.* 1292b26-28: "ἔχουσι γὰρ ἐργαζόμενοι ζῆν, οὐ δύνανται δὲ σχολάζειν, ὥστε τὸν νόμον ἐπιστήσαντες ἐκκλησιάζουσι τὰς ἀναγκαίας ἐκκλησίας."

³¹⁹ Ober (1998): 294.

of democracy to democratic Athens.³²⁰ In many ways, Aristotle's critiques are similar to Plato's, the Old Oligarch's, and Thucydides' critiques of Athens.

As I noted above in a quote seized on by modern and ancient epistemic democracy theorists, however, Aristotle also famously noted that there were situations where the numerical superiority of mass bodies could actually enhance their collective wisdom. Many modern democratic theorists seek to conjoin such a claim to Condorcet's jury theorem to make their cases about democratic wisdom. My review of political and social behavior as occurred in Athens, particularly in respect to how institutions and individuals gathered and employed information, seems to speak to these dual aspects of human existence. I would argue that one of the clear ways that the desire to know can be satisfied is through the interactions of the social community. The stereotypical πολυπράγμων is a character who seems particularly given over to that human concern with knowing, and it seems that the institutional and social conditions with regard to politically useful information in Athens might have presumed (or at least enabled and rendered beneficial) those individuals who took it upon themselves to act on such yearnings for knowledge within the communal and social life of the ancient city state.

Aristotle actually differs from Plato in his own assessment of πολυπραγμοσύνη. He declares in the *Nicomachean Ethics*—citing Euripides—that it is assumed by many that those actively involved in politics are busybodies, and therefore the wise are those who stay quiet, reserved, and seek their own good (Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1142a2-7).³²¹ Yet, in Aristotle's

³²⁰ Hansen (1999): 71; Ober (2008): 294.

³²¹ Leigh (2013): 24; Aristotle cites Euripides' lost play *Philoctetes*, in which Odysseus ponders between living a quiet life, or to be a restless, aspiring man of action.

mind, such a policy is largely untenable when considering individuals as part of a broader community. He states that it is impossible for an individual to tend to his or her own affairs without engaging in things of the community and the state; what we would call politics. Following one's individual good often comes in tandem with the good and interest of the political community—to call it πολυπραγμοσύνη and dismiss it as meddlesomeness would do injustice to the contribution to the community that such behaviors might entail.³²²

While here it seems that Aristotle is referring to specifically political participation through institutions, I believe that his line of argumentation can be linked to the nature of human desire to know, as well as the ability of each individual to contribute to a political decision-making process. Aristotle had too noted in the *Metaphysics* when speaking of truth, that no one person can obtain all of it, but neither can each individual amongst all fail entirely. While individuals might make a small and limited contribution to the total inquiry alone, when brought together, their common knowledge might be of great magnitude (Arist. *Metaph.* 993a30-b3). Such logic informs the epistemic argument made by modern democratic theorists, and tied together with Aristotle's other comments, cements a basis for the role of the πολυπράγμων in the community. If all those who engage in inquisitive, searching, restless activity, be it through institutional politics, or through social interactions in the city of Athens, are labeled as πολυπράγμων, and simply discounted, something will be lost from the epistemic conversation. This is especially true if one agrees with the premise that politically relevant information is not solely something gained from institutional, educational, or hierarchical sources of learning, but can also be embedded in and accessed through social relationships. Those individuals who satisfy their desires to

³²² Leigh (2013): 23.

know by exploring them through social interactions are better able to contribute to the common pool of knowledge when enabled to participate in mass decision-making institutions such as the ones that existed in Athens in the fourth century B.C. By Aristotle's criteria, πολυπραγμοσύνη of this type appears to be tapping into some of our deeper impulses as rational knowers and social animals.

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