1

THE TROUBLE WITH ARISTOCRACY

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'The history of aristocracies … is littered with self-serving myths which outsiders have been surprisingly willing to accept uncritically', a recent study warns (Doyle 2010, xv). Our volume shows that ancient 'aristocracies' and their modern students are no exception. In antiquity, upper classes commonly claimed that they had inherited, or ought to have inherited, their status, privilege and power because their families excelled in personal virtues such as generosity, hospitality and military prowess while abstaining from ignoble 'money-making' pursuits such as commerce or manual labour. In modern scholarship, these claims are often translated into a belief that a hereditary 'aristocratic' class is identifiable at most times and places in the ancient world, whether or not it is in actually in power as an oligarchy, and that deep ideological divisions existed between 'aristocratic values' and the norms and ideals of lower or 'middling' classes. Such ancient claims and modern interpretations are pervasively questioned in this volume.[1] We suggest that 'aristocracy' is only rarely a helpful concept for the analysis of political struggles and historical developments or of ideological divisions and contested discourses in literary and material cultures in the ancient world. Moreover, we argue that a serious study of these subjects requires close analysis of the nature of social inequality in any given time and place, rather than broad generalizations about aristocracies or indeed other elites and their putative ideologies.

'Aristocracy', ancient and modern

What does it mean to label an elite group an 'aristocracy', or a social idea or value 'aristocratic'? For historians reared in European countries, the standard models tend to be the titled orders or estates in European monarchies since the medieval period. Aristocracy in this sense is a 'higher class … typically comprising people of noble birth, holding hereditary titles and offices' (the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* online), a system where both status and power are concentrated in a small number of families operating under strong hereditary principles.[2] There is necessarily of course a strong connection with wealth,

above all in land – individual aristocrats may lose much or all of their wealth, but a class of aristocrats without substantial wealth is hardly imaginable – yet titles and associated access to locations of power are in principle determined by birth. The outstanding personal qualities deemed vital to good government of the state are supposedly found only in certain 'noble' families. Such a hereditary system is often institutionalised through a system of formal 'honours' in the gift of the monarch, delivered through things such as titles, coats of arms, banners, distinctions of dress and equipment; service in the army and in tournaments as knights, and privileged access to governing bodies, such as a House of Lords.[3]

On the other hand, scholars brought up in the USA or other parts of the world where the political system was originally founded on a rejection of inherited titles and privilege may be less instinctively inclined to assume that 'aristocrats' necessarily make claims to pre-eminence through a long-standing nobility of birth. They tend to operate with a model of a more fluid system where elite dynasties are more patently based on great wealth, landed or industrial, and where there are no institutionalised honours and privileges.[4] On this understanding, aristocracy includes 'all those who by birth or fortune occupy a position distinctly above the rest of the community, and is also used figuratively of those who are superior in other respects' (*Oxford English Dictionary,* definition 5).[5] Aristocracy in this sense is thus essentially a synonym for 'elite'. Yet even in this loose sense the word surely cannot fail to suggest an especially exclusive elite: narrower perhaps, more elevated, or more distinctive than other kinds of upper class. A disadvantage of using 'aristocracy', as opposed to 'elite' or 'upper class', is thus that the word implies a highly exclusive group but contains a fundamental ambiguity about whether or not this exclusivity is based on heredity.

There surely were some elites in the ancient world, at certain times and places, that deserve to be called 'aristocracies' in the narrower sense, but arguably many fewer than often supposed, and the progress of scholarship in the last 30-40 years has done much to reduce their number or significance. One notable example is the Roman patriciate, which comes closer than most ancient elites to being an aristocracy in the full sense. It is now widely accepted that what our sources present as popular agitation from 494 BC onwards to break up a stable, centuries-old monopoly on power was in fact resistance against the first 'closing of the patriciate', i.e. an attempt to *create* an exclusive hereditary oligarchy, which was never completely successful and lasted only about three generations, from c. 450 to 367 BC.[6] Even the local, regional and imperial elites of the Roman Empire at its most

developed were not the stable, exclusive ruling classes they appear to be at first glance (as shown by Tacoma, this volume). Conditions in the archaic and classical Greek world, the main focus of our volume, were no different in this respect.

First, in both archaic and classical Greece a powerful individual such as a *basileus* or *tyrannos* may be found at the head of government but such figures do not bear much resemblance to European monarchs. The powers and often the very identities of the *basileis* widely supposed to have held power in the early stages of Greek *poleis* are uncertain; however, where we may suppose *basileis* to have existed, so did hereditary principles.[7] Many of the famous tyrants of the seventh to the fifth centuries attempted to found lasting dynasties, but any legitimacy they could claim grew swiftly weaker, and none managed to last beyond the third generation or over a century. Finally there might be special fixed-term appointments like that of Pittakos, *aisymnetes* in Mytilene, normally with specific lawgiving tasks. None of these relatively weak rulers, naturally, had any powers to grant permanent privileges or honours to their friends and supporters, and so nowhere do we find anything resembling the holders of hereditary titles and positions such as the dukes, counts, knights and so on who entered the medieval world from the Late Roman empire.

Secondly, our evidence for hereditary elites in archaic Greek states is very limited. We have a few elites with titles suggestive of closed groups of families who are said to have dominated office-holding. The Bacchiadai in Corinth and the Eupatridai in Athens are relatively well-attested, but we have only passing references to Penthilidai and competing families in Mytilene, Neleidai in Miletos, and Basilidai at Erythrai.[8] Most of these groups are named after a city-founder or other early king, and the *–idai* and *–adai* suffixes are usually taken to indicate descent: 'sons of Bacchis, Penthilos, Neleus, Basile', and in Athens 'sons of good fathers'. But the same suffixes were used for *fictive* kinship groups such as the association of rhapsodes knows as Homeridai, and it has been argued that in some cases, including the Athenian Eupatridai, no shared parentage was implied at all.[9] Moreover, other elites were explicitly named for their wealth rather than descent: the 'land-sharers' of Samos and Syracuse (*Geomoroi*, *Gamoroi*); the horse owners of Eretria and Chalcis (*Hippeis*, *Hippobotai*).[10] To label such elites 'aristocracies', as scholars often do, when they themselves made no claim to exclusive descent, seems rather perverse and is certainly misleading.

Alongside the evidence for hereditary elites in particular cities, Homer's epics and Theognis' elegies were long regarded as contemporary evidence for the prevalence of aristocracy across early Greece. In *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, we encounter beside the 'king' a group of *basileis* which many scholars have taken to be a hereditary class, reflecting the existence of hereditary aristocracies in Early Iron Age Greece. This idea was challenged by Walter Donlan, who saw *basileis* as 'chiefs' with positions based partly on birth and partly on merit within a 'tribal' system of 'rank' that predated a society stratified by social class. Others have gone further and argued that *basileus* can mean any man of merit, or any head of household.[11] Heredity does seem to play a significant role in Homer, but personal merit is stressed at least as much and that the importance of wealth is taken for granted throughout. Since the epics portray a world that is at best an idealized version of reality, we can probably conclude that hereditary privilege, and inherited personal qualities and wealth were an *ideal* in early Greece, but not that it was dominant ideal, let alone the norm in real life.[12]

As for Theognis' elegies, the dominant view that the political poems of the Theognid collection represent the bitter grievances of a traditional Megarian aristocracy under challenge from *nouveaux riches* and an ungrateful people,[13] has recently been countered with the suggestion that these poems' idealised and generalised representation of 'good men' contains little that is 'aristocratic' in the full sense.[14] If the poems reflect (or at least start from) conditions in mainland Megara in the sixth century,[15] they concern a *polis* for which we have no evidence of any political groups or systems before the tyranny of Theagenes, in the second half of the seventh century,[16] nor any sign of claims to exclusive power exercised by a group of families with genealogical names.[17] Most poems in the Theognid corpus which complain about the state of politics and society do not represent an ideology in which power is justified primarily on the basis on ancestry of landed wealth and past leadership in the community. The basis of the claims to excellence is rather a simple – and highly dubious – assertion of superior moral values in the speaker's group such as courage, trust, loyalty, reciprocity and justice, i.e. it is closer to a claim to 'aristocracy' in the strict Greek sense. When noble birth is cited as an important criterion for 'goodness' (*arete),* or for being one of the *agathoi* (esp. at 183-96), it is in the social context of a choice of marriage partners, rather than as part of a grumble about new holders of political power; there is no suggestion that 'goodness' lasted over many generations. Theognis' ideology

may contain what one may call aristocratic tendencies or ambitions, but it does not place noble birth at the centre of its discussion of 'goodness' or 'justice' (*dikaiosyne*).

Thirdly, it was long held that the dominance of aristocracies in many states was supported by a traditional and hierarchical structure of long-standing tribes (often called *phylai*), subdivided into other hereditary groups (such as phratries, *patrai*, etc.), which were supposedly dominated by aristocratic smaller groups (e.g. the *genê* in Athens). This view was dealt a mortal blow in 1976 by the simultaneous and independent work of Bourriot on the Attic *gene* and Roussel on the tribes and phratries throughout Greece.[18] They demonstrated that these pseudo-kinship organisations were not survivals from earlier, pre-*polis*, 'tribal' states, but constructs which were constantly being redefined during the archaic and classical periods, as cities kept adapting their identities, their citizenship regulations, their mythical histories and their festivals. This does not exclude the possibility that in some cases at least, for example at Athens, some smaller groups which in later periods still provided priests for old-style cults and renegotiated and fought over their positions of some privilege, had had more political power in the sixth century than they did later.[19]

Fourthly, ancient Greek, unlike later European languages or the Latin of the Republic, did not operate with value terms which unambiguously indicate superiority, power or distinction justified primarily by birth. This might seem odd, as our 'aristocratic' terms are obviously derived from the Greek *aristokratia*, *aristokratikos* and *aristokrateisthai*. But these terms were not used primarily to indicate a class whose power is justified above all by birth.[20] When they appear in fifth- and fourth-century writers (e.g. Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle), they essentially maintain their basic meaning of 'rule by the few who are morally the best', and noble birth only occasionally appears among the criteria of 'moral virtue' for such few, along with wealth, education, fairness or courage.[21] Similarly the other 'moral' terms which could be appropriated by the rich and powerful to indicate their superiority, such as *agathoi, aristoi, beltioi, kaloi, chrestoi*, or *epieikeis*, are equally moralising and socially non-specific, while those terms which do suggest superiority of birth, such as *eugeneis* and *eugeneia*,[22] *gennaioi, eupatridai*, or indicate rather wealth, such as *plousioi* (rich), or *pachees* (fat cats), or reputation (*gnorimoi*), or education and wit (*eutrapeloi, charientes*) are less frequently appealed to, and do not necessarily imply power-holding. As Alain Duplouy emphasizes (2006, and in this volume), to label such discussions where self-styled *agathoi* defend their position or values as in, say, the *Theognidea* as

defences of *aristocratic* principles suppresses the interplay of many different criteria of excellence. It is probably right to see in some of these cases some elements of 'aristocratic' thinking, suggestions of privilege and political power for elites justified at least in part by birth, but this is a long way from a firm connection between noble birth and power.

One particular collocation of values – *kalos kai agathos*, literally 'noble and good' – was long supposed to be the most specific term for an upper class of aristocrats, in the archaic period as well as the classical. But a strong case has been made, by Donlan (1973) and at great length by Bourriot (1995),[23] that the phrase itself did not exist before the second half of the fifth century. It seems that the notion came into vogue around this time as a term of high social and moral evaluation, but with no especially strong connection with 'landed aristocrats'; rather it was available as a term of praise for decent members of the leisured classes, moderate oligarchs, or those with cultivated tastes or specialist knowledge.[24]

Fifthly and finally, insofar as inherited wealth is an essential feature of aristocracy, we must question the assumption that the transmission of property in the ancient world was sufficiently stable to allow the creation of closed elites. This assumption, usually tacit, was made explicit by Finley in his account of *The World of Odysseus*:

> The economy was such that the creation of new fortunes, and thereby of new nobles, was out of the question. Marriage was strictly class-bound, so that the other door to social advancement was also securely locked … There was little possibility, under normal, peaceful conditions, to acquire new land' (1954/1977, 53, 59-60).

Even for the Homeric world, the validity of these claims is questionable, and they certainly cannot be taken to apply to early Greece in general, let alone to the ancient world as a whole. Even if 'peaceful conditions' were 'normal', there was a great deal of warfare, raiding and violent internal conflict that saw landed and other property change hands. In many periods and places extensive overseas settlement or 'internal colonisation' brought new land and other resources into use. As early as Hesiod, we have evidence for farmers increasing their wealth by trading surplus produce overseas: 'the bigger the cargo, the larger the profit upon profit' (*Works and Days* 644).[25] The evidence for 'strictly class-bound' marriage is in fact confined to the Bacchiadai at Corinth (Hdt. 5.92.β1) and a short-lived attempt by the patricians to institute it at Rome.[26] Theognis may deplore the universal willingness to marry into wealth, regardless of all other considerations (above), but this only

confirms that marriage was not 'class-bound' in his day; we cannot infer that it once used to be the norm.

What is more, whereas the strict primogeniture practiced by for instance the British aristocracy helped ensure at least a degree of stability, the system of partible inheritance in force everywhere in the Greek and Roman worlds inherently tended to create instability. A property large enough to secure elite status might no longer be sufficient in the next generation when equally divided among three sons, especially when substantial dowries or other shares for daughters were deducted. The twin trends that resulted were instant downward mobility for many individuals but at the same time a longer-term trend for fragmented properties to coalesce into larger estates controlled by fewer and fewer families (see Tacoma, this volume). The classic illustration of this problem is Sparta, which set a high economic threshold for full citizenship but did not allow for those whose inheritance ended up falling short of the requirement to be replaced by the newly wealthy or by outsiders: a catastrophic loss of citizen manpower.[27] Under the conditions of partible inheritance, any elite that tried to close it itself off on the basis of heredity, would have suffered the same fate, quickly growing smaller if less wealthy descendants were dropped, or becoming internally deeply divided if even impoverished families retained their inherited status.

In sum, the political and economic preconditions for the creation of hereditary aristocracies of the medieval and early modern European type (strong royal authority, stable transmission of wealth) did not exist in most parts of the ancient world, and we have much less evidence than we used to imagine for the importance of hereditary status and privilege in general and for the existence of closed hereditary elites in particular. We have every reason to doubt, therefore, that social and political elites in the ancient world commonly took the form of 'aristocracies' in the full sense, or that those which did take this form could have lasted long. We should be alert to regional variations (see Whitley, this volume) and consider each state and each period in its own right, as many contributors to this volume do in examining the nature of elites and their self-justifications in Athens, Aegina, Samos, Crete and Sicily.[28] Only where we can be confident that heredity really was the primary criterion for membership in the elite does it seem appropriate to use the label 'aristocracy'. Arguably the Bacchiadai in Corinth and the patricians at their most 'closed' are the only elites that deserve this label, but even if we were to accept other candidates as well, we would not be justified in speaking of 'aristocracy' as general phenomenon in any period of antiquity.

'Aristocratic society', ancient and modern

If the concept of aristocracy may be profoundly misleading, how does this affect our ideas about the social structures of which aristocracies form part? Modern analogies, despite having been generally rejected as inapplicable to the ancient world, have nevertheless again, indirectly, exercised a strong distorting influence on our picture of ancient society.

In modern European history, it was above all the emergence of an ever more wealthy 'bourgeoisie' of industrialists and merchants that reduced the political power of hereditary landowning aristocracies to the point where 'the executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie', as *The Communist Manifesto* put it (Marx and Engels 1848, 6). Some scholars used to argue that the same thing happened in antiquity: most famously, Percy Ure in *The Origins of Tyranny* (1922) suggested that aristocracy was overthrown in archaic Greece by tyrants who represented a newly wealthy class of craftsmen and traders, enriched by the opportunities provided by colonization and expanding trade. This 'deeply entrenched assumption that there must have been a powerful capitalist class between the landowning aristocracy and the poor' has been widely criticized as anachronistic and is now widely and rightly rejected.[29]

Yet we still operate with a diluted version of this model insofar as scholars typically assume that the starting point of ancient social history was a situation in which aristocrats monopolized both political power and landownership, so that 'ruling class' and socio-economic 'upper class' coincided and a challenge to the ruling aristocracy could only come from outside the established upper class of landowners. 'The hereditary ruling aristocrats' in early Greece 'were by and large the principal landowners', even if their opponents included 'some men who had *become* prosperous themselves' (De Ste Croix 1981, 280; emphasis added); at Rome, the patricians were 'by and large … the richest landowners', though 'not quite *all* the wealthiest families' were included 'of course', and the leading plebeians 'were mainly rich men' (ibid., 334; emphasis original).[30] Hereditary aristocracy and propertied class were thus supposedly almost identical, and by implication resistance to aristocratic dominance must have come from an equivalent of the modern bourgeoisie, be it a rival elite of *nouveaux riches* or a broader 'middle class' or even simply the 'commoners', 'masses', *demos* or *plebs* in general. It is not easy to demonstrate that or how any of these groups did in fact acquire the power to oppose the aristocracy, and scholars often simply posit that it

must have happened, as the only possible explanation for the aristocracy's loss of power.[31] If we accept, however, that it is no more than a modern assumption that ruling aristocracies were identical with the upper class of landowners, tacitly borrowed from medieval and early modern models along with the assumption that hereditary aristocracy was the norm in early Greece and Rome, another line of explanation becomes conceivable.

We may take as our starting point the situation which prevailed in classical and later antiquity, when the main social divide was determined by wealth, not by birth. The widely accepted conclusion of the two classic studies of ancient social and economic history, Moses Finley's *The Ancient Economy* (1973) and Geoffrey de Ste Croix's *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (1981), is that 'the most important single dividing line' in ancient Greek and Roman society separated 'the propertied class' from the rest of the population. This propertied class consisted of those who were rich enough to be exempt from the need to work for a living, and typically lived a life of more or less ostentatious leisure.[32] By far their most important form of property was agricultural land; anyone who had become rich by other means would have to convert his wealth into landed property in order to join the propertied elite.[33] Wide differences in wealth and prestige within this elite – De Ste Croix spoke of 'propertied classes' in the plural, divided by scale and type of property (1981, 116), whereas Finley preferred 'a spectrum of statuses or orders' (1973, 68) – were less important than the line between leisured property owners and the rest of the community. The ruling class sometimes coincided with the propertied class, but often it was much smaller. In later Republican Rome the 'propertied class' was divided into a ruling elite of senators and a 'non-political' class of *equites* (De Ste Croix 1981, 42) while in classical Greece ruling elites were of widely different sizes and might include at their narrowest only 'a few leading families, forming a hereditary *dynasteia*' (ibid., 283).

Once we abandon the medieval model of aristocracy, there is no reason to think that the earliest Greek and Roman elites were any different. We certainly have no actual evidence that patricians, Bacchiadai, or the like, monopolized landownership as opposed to political privileges.[34] By contrast, the existence of a substantial number of rich men outside the 'aristocracy' is clearly implied by the struggles for the highest political offices – archonship and consulship – in sixth-century Athens and fifth-century Rome, and we have no grounds for assuming that these men of wealth were a small group or of recent origin.[35] Hesiod's *Works & Days*, composed in the *persona* of a landowner who is not part of the ruling elite of

basileis, yet employs a minimum of four slaves and two hired labours on annual contracts, owns a range of livestock and a ship, and aspires – beyond self-sufficiency and freedom from debt and hunger – to success in competitive accumulation of wealth, becomes easier to understand if the poem reflects the existence in seventh-century Greece of a propertied elite, rather than a 'peasantry', excluded from power.[36] The tradition of the Servian Reform in Rome implies that a formal property-class distinction between the *classis* and those who were *infra classem* (as well as perhaps a legal distinction between landowning *adsidui* and landless *proletarii*) was introduced in the sixth century BC, *before* the patriciate tried to close itself off as a ruling class within this propertied elite (see n. 5, above).

In short, it seems likely that from the very beginning of social stratification in early Greece and Rome, the upper social classes were elites of wealth, defined above all by their ability to live in leisure off the labour of others, and that the 'aristocracies' and other exclusive ruling classes which developed from time to time in some places were not necessarily identical with the propertied class but typically formed an elite within the elite. When aristocracies lost their power, therefore, we need not look for the arrival of a new social and political force, the equivalent of the modern bourgeoisie, as the instrument of their demise, but can consider it likely that their main rival for power – also the main rival of oligarchic regimes in later periods – was the politically excluded part of the established propertied elite.

This has important implications. Instead of having to posit the existence of socially ostracised *nouveaux riches*, we can contemplate the possibility of fluid up- and downward social mobility into and out of the propertied class, as opposed to ruling clique.[37] Instead of having to assume the emergence of a powerful new 'middle class' or a new assertiveness by the community at large, we can consider whether the power struggles of early Greece and Rome may have been fought largely within the propertied elite, and whether the struggles for social justice and economic fairness fought by the lower classes may have been triggered, not by any new-found power of a middle class or the community, but by an escalation in the exploitation and humiliation which they suffered at the hands of the propertied classes.[38]

The influential notion of a rising middle class itself derives largely from a modern model. Even scholars who reject the idea that a commercial bourgeoisie ever arose in antiquity have often felt the need to identify a different form of middle class: the men who formed the bulk of the heavily armed militia and as such had the means and the justification to take a share in power. This idea was first suggested for both Greece and Rome by Martin Nilsson

(1929a, b) and appears in the work of both Finley and De Ste Croix, among many others, whether or not the militia is actually labelled a 'middle class'.[39] It was the hoplite militia, consisting of 'a middle class of relatively prosperous, but non-aristocratic, farmers with a sprinkling of merchants, shippers and craftsmen', that ousted the aristocracy, according to Finley, who conceded that it was 'obscure' how this class emerged (1970, 98-9, 103). Greek hoplites, Macedonian phalangites and Roman legionaries were credited with the same role by De Ste Croix, who was more precise about their composition: 'a good proportion' came from the propertied classes, but militias 'must always have included at the lowest hoplite level a certain number of men who needed to spend a certain amount of their time working for their living, generally as peasant farmers' (115; cf. 280); he estimated the size of a Greek militia as 'something between one-fifth and one-third of all citizens in most cases' (283).

The views of Finley and De Ste Croix on this subject are particularly striking because their general models of ancient society do not actually have any place for hoplites as a social class. Both argued that only two classes existed below the propertied class. First, the 'peasantry' forming the great majority of free people: 'self-employed workers, either as smallholders or tenants on the land, or as independent craftsmen, traders and moneylenders in the towns' (Finley 1973, 73); 'small independent producers' who 'did not exploit the labour of others to any substantial degree, but lived by their own efforts on or near the subsistence level' (De Ste Croix 1981, 4). Secondly, at the bottom of the social hierarchy, the 'dependent' labour force which performed the productive work from which the elite derived its revenue (see below). Militia membership thus did not coincide with the main social classes but cut across them – including a small proportion of working farmers alongside a large proportion of the propertied elite – and it was not itself deemed a social distinction worth featuring in these models of social stratification.[40] If these scholars nevertheless credited the militia with ending the power of the aristocracy, it was clearly not because of a well-attested place for the militia in social structure, but surely because an anachronistic model of the decline of 'aristocracy' suggested that some sort of 'middle' class must have been responsible, and the militia seemed the sole available candidate to play the role of the modern bourgeoisie.

Ancient evidence for the importance of a middle class is confined to Aristotle's eulogy of 'the middle' (*to meson*) as a force for stability where they are numerous enough to provide a balance (*Politics* 1295b3-97b29). He himself noted that 'the middle' was almost always too small in Greek cities to achieve such a balance (1296a23-7), and that rare 'middle

constitutions' never lasted long (1296a37-40). How the 'middle class' is defined in social and economic terms remains quite unclear, except that they fall between 'very rich' and 'very poor' (1295b3) and include the likes of Lycurgus, 'because he was not a king' (1296a18-21). A single passage links 'the middle' to the militia but does not equate the two, implying only that the middle class fell within the hoplite range (1297b16-29), while a discussion of the ideal middle constitution explains that it should include only hoplites, but not all hoplites: a property qualification must be set to exclude the poorer sections of the militia (1297b1-12). It is thus entirely possible that Aristotle's 'middle class' refers mainly to a section of the propertied elite, and that the description of this group as 'middle' is a theoretical construct motivated by Aristotle's philosophical ideas rather than a real-life social category.[41]

As for the hoplite militia, evidence for its membership is far from clear-cut. In fifth-century Athens, there is no doubt that it extended below the propertied classes to include working farmers, insofar as these owned shields and spears and were available for mobilization in general levies. But those who were liable to serve as hoplites also in offensive campaigns overseas apparently came from a narrower group whom Aristotle called 'the notables', i.e. the propertied class (*Pol*. 1303a8-10). In Sparta and Crete, all hoplites belonged to the class of leisured landowners, and this was also the ideal of Greek political theory, including Plato's and Aristotle's. In Rome, the property qualification for legionary service in the highest *classis*, originally the only *classis*, was 100,000-125,000 *asses*: the equivalent of 1.5-2 talents of silver, easily leisure-class-level wealth. If the *zeugitai* in Solon's property-class system were as wealthy as later evidence suggests and were the lowest class liable for hoplite service – both points are contested – then the threshold for hoplite service was set equally high in archaic Athens.[42] It is often argued that almost as soon as hoplite armour was invented, c. 700 BC, it must have been adopted by everyone who could afford it and that this must have included numerous 'well-to-do and middling peasants' (De Ste Croix 1981, 280). We cannot simply assume, however, that this category of working farmers formed a significant social and economic group in the archaic age, as it did in classical Athens (but not Sparta), and if their numbers were small in archaic Greece, the only men who could afford hoplite armour would have belonged to the propertied class.[43]

This is not the place to pursue these problems any further. It will suffice to reiterate that the evidence for the rise of a hoplite class below the 'aristocracy' or propertied class is in itself anything but compelling, and that, once we abandon the traditional model of

aristocracy, we are no longer forced to identify such a class but are free to reconsider who constituted the militia, and what role, if any, they may have played in internal power struggles.[44] By the same token, we are free not to regard the rise of the *polis* as the result of a struggle by 'the people' to constrain the power of long-established 'aristocracies' but as the creation of a propertied elite formally establishing its collective rights and privileges both against the 'poor' and against would-be 'aristocrats' amongst themselves.[45]

Finally, the medieval model may also have affected our traditional model of the working classes in the ancient world. Just as medieval aristocrats relied on 'serfs' to cultivate their land, so ancient landowners are thought to have relied primarily on 'unfree' or 'dependent' labour to work their estates. Finley posited, as if it were a well-established fact, that 'historically speaking, the institution of wage labour is a sophisticated latecomer'; in early history, a labour force beyond 'the household or kinship group'

> was obtained not by hiring it but by compelling it, by force of arms or by force of law and custom. This involuntary labour force, furthermore, was normally not composed of slaves but of one or another "half-way" type, such as the debt-bondsman, the helot, the early Roman client, the late Roman *colonus* (1973, 65-6).

De Ste Croix agreed that 'the single most important organisational difference between the ancient economy and that of the modern world' was the 'very small degree' to which the propertied classes used hired labour (1981, 179) rather than slaves, serfs or debt-bondsmen (133-74), or, as Finley preferred, a 'spectrum' of dependent statuses (1973, 66-9). This model evidently draws not only on medieval serfdom but also on the idea that the modern bourgeoisie was the first to make wage labour the normal form of exploitation, so that in antiquity hired labour must have been marginal at best. So *The Communist Manifesto*:

> In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society in various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society … has simplified the class antagonisms. Society is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes facing one another … In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e. capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed. (Marx and Engels 1848, 3-4, 10-11)

Again we may wonder whether this model is really applicable to antiquity. It is true that slaves are more often mentioned in our sources than hired workers – though it may be noted that in Athenian mining and construction, at any rate, slaves were employed as hired labour, even if their wages were collected by their owners – and that in the workshops where the modern bourgeois would have employed hired men we typically find slaves in antiquity. De Ste Croix argued at length that hired labour was so deeply despised and miserable that no free man would have been willing to undertake it (1981, 179-204), while Finley suggested that there was simply no scope for hired labour, except some extra seasonal harvesting work for otherwise independent working farmers, and 'odd jobs as porters at the docks or in the building trades' for the destitute (1973, 73-4). Yet both authors commit a sleight of hand in glossing over two major kinds of hired labour. They noted in passing the role of paid military service but dismissed it as an exception and irrelevance – but civic and mercenary service, especially as oarsmen in navies, provided wages for many thousands for considerable periods of time from the late sixth century BC onwards.[46] They further classed tenant farmers as 'independent peasants', despite the fact that tenants by definition do not own the land on which they work.[47] A tenant paying a fixed rent might be almost as free as an independent farmer, but he would still in essence provide labour to the landowner on a contractual basis; in less favourable forms of contract such as sharecropping, it is even more obvious that we dealing with a form of hired labour.

Moreover, we have numerous references to 'hired labourers' (*thetes*) in agriculture from the earliest Greek literature onwards, and in Homer, Hesiod and Solon alike the references are to annual contracts, not to casual seasonal labour. In the classical period, up to 15,000 stranded oarsmen were able to find alternative hired employment in agriculture on Chios and Corcyra.[48] More remarkably still, the entire lowest property class in Athens was labelled *thetes* by the time of Solon, if not earlier, which at a minimum must imply that the propertied classes saw these people primarily as their 'hired labourers', even if many *thetes* may have had other sources of income as well. On even the most optimistic interpretation, this lowest class made up 50% of Athens' citizen population; if our sources are right about the qualification for the next property class, it must have been nearer 85%.[49] Aristotle regarded 'the wage labourers' (*to thetikon*) as a sufficiently important element of 'the people', alongside farmers, craftsmen and retail traders, to argue that their inclusion in the citizen body would alter the nature of democracy, for the worse (*Pol.* 1296b25-30; 1317a23-

9; 1319a24-38). This is not to say, of course, that wage labour was as important in antiquity as in the modern world, or that a developed 'labour market' existed, but merely that hired labour may have been much more common than the model would have us believe.

If so, we may also need to reconsider the scale of free 'peasantry' in ancient society. The claim that independent working farmers formed the majority of the free population in most periods of antiquity is not based on any attested figures, but follows from the model. If the role of hired labour was minimal, then almost everyone, apart from those who worked under coercion on the land of the rich, must have made a living independently – which in an agricultural society means largely from their own land. It was indeed a key part of Finley's model that in many parts of the ancient world the forms of dependent labour which were originally the norm were abolished, so that the only two remaining categories were chattel slaves and free peasants. When and why this happened remains unclear.[50] The reverse development, a widespread swing from free to 'dependent' labour, occurred according to both Finley and De Ste Croix in late antiquity and paved the way for medieval serfdom.[51] But if we allow a larger role for wage labour, sharecropping, tenancy and so forth, the number of independent farmers shrinks accordingly, and the transitions become less dramatic. The allotments of Roman colonists, for example, often seem too small to sustain independent farmers, and may have been designed to ensure that the colonists would have to seek paid employment and patronage from richer neighbours.[52] Independent working farmers may have been admired – though not as much as landowners who employed others to work their estates – but it does not follow that they formed the majority of free men.

In sum, 'aristocracy' has brought with it a whole series of assumptions about the structure of ancient society, some borrowed anachronistically from medieval aristocracy and serfdom, others developed – ironically – in an effort to avoid anachronism and work out what social groups must have existed instead of a commercial bourgeoisie and labouring proletariat. Without these assumptions, a good deal of ancient evidence seems open to quite different interpretations, and we suggest that these alternatives are well worth exploring.

'Aristocratic values', ancient and modern

The notion of 'aristocratic values' or 'aristocratic ideology' is beset by even greater ambiguities and obscurities than the concept of aristocracy as such. One often has the impression that scholars simply assume that all norms and ideals of behaviour attributed to

members of the elite by our sources were exclusively 'aristocratic' values, which the rest of the community did not share or at any rate did not try equally hard to live by. Since we have very little evidence for the norms and ideals of the lower classes, it is very easy to slip into making such assumptions – and all the more important to avoid doing so. Some major models of the rise of the Greek *polis* and subsequently of democracy have been formulated in terms of a direct contest between 'aristocratic' (or 'elitist') values and non-aristocratic (or 'middling') ethos and lifestyle, so it is important to be precise in our use of such concepts.

A fundamental distinction needs to be made at the outset between two different kinds of potentially 'aristocratic' value. The first kind of value serves to make distinctions, to 'differentiate' between groups of unequal status: such values tend to shape a distinctive lifestyle and may include the articulation of an ethos which other social groups do not share. The second kind of value serves to justify inequality of status or power, to 'legitimate' the existence of 'aristocracy' or some other form of hierarchy. Unlike 'differentiating' standards, 'legitimating' norms, ideals and principles of social order must be definition be shared by other social groups, or else they could not have the desired effect of persuading the community that inequality is fair or even necessary. Ideally, the two kinds of value coincide, as when an elite shares the ethos of the rest of the community but differentiates itself by claiming to attain much higher standards than the lower classes, and legitimates itself by claiming that its ability to reach such standards brings benefit to the rest of the community. But in reality there will often be tension between the two kinds of value: an elite may differentiate itself too much and thereby undermine its legitimacy; or it may not do enough to legitimate itself and thereby limit its scope to differentiate itself without alienating those of lower status; or it may differentiate and legitimate itself in ways that seem mutually incompatible, for instance setting itself apart by a lifestyle of luxurious leisure while claiming to serve as a military elite that protects the community. These important tensions must not be glossed over by an imprecise and indiscriminate use of the term 'aristocratic values'.

For early Greece and Italy, scholars have typically imagined a 'warrior culture' in which values of military prowess both differentiate and legitimate the elite. The upper class was distinctive in cultivating high standards of courage, fame and honour, and of military skill and equipment, which the common man accepted as admirable even if he did not and could not himself aspire to such excellence; the upper class was legitimate because their military excellence was essential in providing protection for the lower classes. We shall argue that

this picture is based on a highly selective interpretation of the evidence, guided by a model of aristocratic values based on an impression of medieval military elites. A single strand of the legitimating values found in Homeric epic has been picked out because it is reminiscent of 'knightly' ideology, and has been wrongly regarded as representing not only the full range of elite legitimations but also the full reality of an exclusive elite lifestyle. The same selectivity and confusion between different kinds of elite values has affected accounts of historical developments, so that scholars have posited changes in elite ideology or clashes between ideologies where there were none, while they have downplayed or overlooked ideological changes and conflicts which did occur but do not fit the model.

'Legitimating' elite values in Homer

An attempt to improve our understanding of 'aristocratic' values must begin with the *Iliad*. Here Achilles engages in fierce rivalry with Agamemnon for 'respect' or 'honour' (*timê*), fights Hector in battle to exact revenge, and prepares to die in combat for the sake of fame (*kleos*) and glory (*kudos*). From Moses Finley's *The World of Odysseus* (1954/1977) onwards, many historians have concluded that the life of early Greek 'aristocrats' revolved entirely around war and conflict, driven by a selfish quest for honour and fame. Homer's heroes lived in 'a warrior culture … and the main theme of a warrior culture is constructed on two notes – prowess and honour … The heroic code was complete and unambiguous' (Finley 1954, 113). This code showed no interest in the wider community: 'a notion of social obligation is fundamentally non-heroic' (116). The elite was selfish, honour-obsessed and fame-hungry; the community 'could only grow by taming the hero' (117).[53]

   Finley's generalized formulations regarding 'warrior cultures' and 'heroic' values reveal the influence of prior assumptions,[54] and the influence of modern aristocratic models in particular is clear. Finley rightly rejected the idea of 'feudal' land tenure in Homer, but otherwise his heroes show uncanny similarities to European knights. They are maintain 'a whole hierarchy of retainers', explicitly compared to the hierarchy from Lord Chamberlain down to 'noble page at some early modern court' (58-9; cf. 103-5), whom they mobilized in violent competition with one another. 'One princely *oikos* vied with another for greater wealth and power, for more prestige and a superior status', under few constraints, because 'a higher coercive power was largely lacking' (105). The king 'gave military leadership and protection, and he gave little else' (97); his position was always precarious as 'the nobles

proposed to … keep the king on the level of a first among equals' (84, 106). The wider community barely existed, except for the purposes of waging 'war, defensive in particular' (82). This is all closely reminiscent of Medieval territorial kingdoms, with kings who were essentially war-leaders and often in a weak position *vis-à-vis* powerful barons. The exclusive 'heroic code' recalls the code of chivalry. Later scholarship has rejected medieval parallels, and in view of the small scale of the small villages and emerging city-states of Early Iron Age Greece preferred to think in terms of far smaller households and a more prominent role for the community.[55] Yet the image of 'aristocratic' values often remains almost unchanged, so powerful is the appeal of Finley's model and the medieval parallels which inspired it.[56]

Three questionable assumptions are made about the nature of Greek 'heroic' values: first, that they formed 'a complete and unambiguous' code (113); secondly, that they were the *only* values of any significance to the upper classes; thirdly, that *only* the upper classes adopted these values.[57] On the first point, a reader of the *Iliad* who is less predisposed to find 'aristocratic values' may well conclude that the heroic code is far from unambiguous. There is a genuine tension between Achilles' desire to avenge slighted honour and the moral pressure to consider the interests of his comrades, accept reconciliation, show respect for higher authority, human and divine, and to have pity – each one of these values surely shared by the common man and conducive to community life.[58]

Secondly, personal fame and honour in war are clearly *not* the heroes' only goals. In combat, they also aim to protect the community; off the battlefield, they compete with equal enthusiasm in public speaking, offering 'good counsel', and arbitrating in legal disputes. Even Achilles is trained to be a 'speaker of words', as well as a 'doer of deeds'; public debate is, like the battlefield, an arena 'where men emerge as outstanding' (*Il*. 9.440-3). Sarpedon's wisdom as a judge is rated on a par with his martial prowess in defence of his people when he is praised as a ruler 'who protected Lycia with his judgements (*dikai*) and his strength' (16.541-2). The competitive element in court proceedings is institutionalized, with a prize for the judge who proposes the best verdict (18.503-8).[59]

Thirdly, the upper classes are *not* alone in valuing excellence in war, assembly and court. Even the greatest heroes aim to win the recognition of the common man in these arenas. Sarpedon and Glaucus must win fame in war so that 'some Lycian' (*tis Lykiôn*) may conclude that they deserve their privileges (*Il*. 12.310-21). Hector's decision to face Achilles in combat rather than retreat behind the walls of Troy – often regarded as the height of self-interested

'aristocratic' glory-seeking – is motivated by his sense that this is the only way to redeem his reputation in the eyes of 'the Trojan men and Trojan women' in general, among whom 'one of lower status' (*tis kakoteros*) might criticize him (22.104-10). Speeches are made in public assemblies and judgements are delivered in front of large crowds in the town square, so these performances, too, are assessed by the people.

In short, Homer imagines the elite as playing roles in which they serve the community, and as competing for the approval of the community at large, as well as of their peers; there is no sign here of diverging upper- and lower-class values. The main threat envisaged to the community is that rivalry for honour may escalate into a damaging conflict, but the *Iliad* never suggests that such rivalry is a strictly upper-class obsession, rejected or at least not shared by the common man. Indeed, it is a 'man of the people', Thersites, who uniquely voices the opinion that Achilles should have reacted *more* violently to being 'dishonoured': 'but truly Achilles has no anger in his soul; he lets things go' (*Il*. 2.239-42; cf. 198). In a famous passage which distinguishes between good and bad 'rivalry' (*eris*), one which causes violence and another which stimulates productivity, Hesiod notes that it affects all social classes: 'potter resents potter, and carpenter, carpenter; beggar envies beggar, and singer, singer' (*Works & Days* 11-26). Rivalry for the position of ruler of Ithaca, for instance, clearly poses a greater danger to the community than rivalry between two paupers to be 'boss of the beggars' (*Od*. 18.106), but that is because the stakes are higher and greater resources can be mobilized, not because the elite behaves according to a different set of 'aristocratic' values.

The values we have considered so far serve to legitimate inequality insofar the elite claim that they are superior to the common people in the competition to excel in bravery, wisdom and justice for the benefit of the community. This alleged gap in personal qualities even justifies different treatment. 'An outstanding man' will be asked to obey 'with pleasant words', since 'it is not appropriate to intimidate you as if you were a bad man (*kakos*)' (2.188-90), but a 'man of the people' may be physically beaten and told: 'Listen to the word of those who are better than you; you are unwarlike and a coward; you do not count at all in war or counsel' (*Il*. 2.198-202). Odysseus threatens the 'worst' man that next time he will strip him naked as well as beat him; 'the masses' praise this as 'the greatest deed Odysseus ever did' (2.211-78). Here, then, is a norm which we may call 'aristocratic', or rather 'elitist': inferiors may be put in their place with violence, while peers must be treated with respect.

Alongside personal qualities, two other legitimating values play a role, sometimes at odds with individual merit: the status of one's family, and 'honour from Zeus'. Diomedes thinks that a speech offering good advice may be 'dishonoured' if the audience thinks that the speaker is '*by descent* a bad and weak man' (*genos ge kakon kai analkida*, Il. 14.126-7). He prefaces his own advice with the claim that 'I too pride myself on being the offspring (*genos*) of a good father', Tydeus, son of Oineus (himself 'outstanding in excellence' among his brothers), who migrated to Argos, married the daughter of king Adrestos, enjoyed great wealth in land and livestock, and 'excelled with the spear among all Greeks' (14.113-25). In turn, Agamemnon thinks that Diomedes might pick a companion for a dangerous mission who is not the best man, but 'a worse one, because you succumb to feelings of respect when you consider his descent' (*geneên*, 10.235-9). Status based on descent can thus override status based on personal merit, which may seem an 'aristocratic' norm. However, Diomedes does not assert that his birth into a particular family entitles him to the privilege of speaking in counsel: he merely says that his father's personal merit and wealth entitle him, the son, to be treated with respect when he speaks. The more one's status relies on the qualities of one's ancestors rather than one's own, the more 'aristocratic' the value system, but Diomedes' claim is at the lower end of the spectrum, priding himself literally on a 'good father' and no more. The principle that one's parents' or grandparents' reputation can enhance, or detract from, one's own status may well apply among the lower classes, too.

By contrast, 'honour from Zeus' is an unambiguously aristocratic principle of legitimation. The concept is that *basileis*, 'lords', are given the right to rule by Zeus, who bestows upon them a hereditary 'staff' which symbolizes their power and especially the right to administer justice. The *Iliad* emphasizes that this is what makes Agamemnon superior to all others, by presenting a detailed history of his 'ancestral staff' (2.46, 100-8), and having Nestor and Odysseus repeatedly explain its significance. Most clearly, Nestor tells Achilles:

> You should not seek to confront a *basileu*s in rivalry, for a staff-bearing *basileus* to whom Zeus gave glory certainly does not have the same share of honour. It is true that you are the stronger man, and a goddess is your mother, but he is better (*phertatos*), because he rules over more people (1.277-81)

Agamemnon's inherited 'honour from Zeus' thus takes the form of power over more subjects than Achilles has, and explicitly outweighs both Achilles' greater personal merit as a

warrior and his superior parentage.[60] And just as Achilles, himself a 'lord', must obey a 'lord' whose divine right is greater than his own, so a common man like Thersites is not allowed to 'challenge the lords' or 'criticize the lords' at all (2.214, 247, 277).

The divine and hereditary right asserted here is not absolute, however: abuse of power results in widespread refusal to obey. Not only does Achilles refuse to serve Agamemnon any longer, but Thersites advocates that the entire army should follow suit (2.236-8) and the poet indicates that resentment at Agamemnon's treatment of Achilles caused many Greeks to fight only half-heartedly (*Il*. 2.222-3; 14.49-51, 131-2). The precarious nature of a lord's divine right to rule, subject to maintaining the consent of the subordinates, explains how Odysseus can imply that the 'privilege' of lords was in the gift of the community, rather than Zeus, when he wishes the *basileis* of the Phaeacians: 'may each one of you pass on to his sons the property in his house and the privilege which the people granted' (*geras th', ho ti dêmos edôken*, 7.149-50).[61] A non-*basileus* may in fact accept the hereditary privilege of the lords to administer justice but interpret instead as legitimated by divine inspiration more than by divine right: Hesiod credited it to the lords' inborn talent to speak eloquently and persuasively which enabled them to settle disputes (*Theogony* 80-92).

Not only are the legitimating values of the elite in Homer thus much more complex and much more widely shared than the model of a 'warrior culture' suggests, they are also much further removed from the 'exclusive' values which the elite adopts to set itself apart.

'Differentiating' elite values in Homer

Scholars have tended to assume that claims of superiority in warfare must have gone hand-in-hand with a distinctively warlike elite lifestyle. What form such a lifestyle might have taken usually remains vague, merely implied by contrast with the 'luxurious' lifestyle of later elites, but it has been suggested that a central feature was the 'warrior feast', later replaced by the 'aristocratic symposion' (see below). However, if we accept that legitimating values are not necessarily the same as differentiating values, we can see beyond military ideology and find that the elite lifestyle in Homer revolves around the cultivation and display of wealth and leisure rather than of martial prowess – or of wisdom, eloquence and justice.

The *Odyssey* shows that a typical day starts with a visit to the *agora* in the morning, for general conversation or for a formal assembly meeting or court session.[62] The rest of the day is taken up with eating and drinking, at home or as someone's guest, including lengthy

preparations involving the slaughter of animals and roasting of meat. The meal normally ends at sunset, but may continue into the night. During the preparations, the guests may spend time in sport or games, and they may take a break from the meal during the afternoon to return to the *agora* for further conversation, sport or other entertainment.[63] The young 'lords' on Ithaca variously play board games (*pessoi*, *Od*. 1.106-8) or 'entertained themselves throwing the discus and javelin' (4.625-7; 17.167-9). The Phaeacians stage a public competition in discus-throwing, running, jumping, wrestling and boxing (8.100-30), after which Odysseus boasts that he can outdo them in each of these sports, as well as in archery and javelin-throwing (8.201-33). Odysseus' wrestling feats are cited as evidence of his superior physical prowess (4.341-5; 17.132-6). That this is all within heroic norms is confirmed by the fact that Achilles' men in the *Iliad* also spend their leisure throwing the discus and javelin and shooting arrows (2.773-5).[64] Whatever military value one attributes to such activities, the key point here is that, apart from archery, all these sports as well as the board games remained typical leisure activities of the classical Greek upper classes.

The entertainment at the dinner itself consists of music, song and dance. In the *Odyssey*, the lyre music and song is always provided by a professional bard, and special emphasis is given to his skill at delivering epic songs to which the diners sit listening in silence, which may give the impression of a particularly martial atmosphere. But it is clear that these bards sing not only epic tales but also songs for which the diners get up and dance, as they did at archaic symposia; an example of the genre is the comical and erotic *Song of Ares and Aphrodite* to which the Phaeacian youth dance collectively in public.[65] Public group dances are in any case a feature of life for unmarried elite youths to the point that Priam can scold his sons for being better dancers than warriors, 'champions of the dance floor' (*Il*. 24.261; cf. 18.603-6), and the bachelor sons of Alcinoos 'always want to go to the dance floor wearing freshly laundered clothes' (*Od*. 6.63-5). Moreover, on the one occasion where we hear of after-dinner entertainment without a bard present, the diners themselves make music: Achilles and Patroclus take turns singing and playing the lyre (*Il*. 9.186-91), a typical feature of the archaic and classical symposion.[66]

As for the composition of the dining group, the diners at a 'warrior feast' are assumed to form a military unit of sorts, either a war band of peers who regularly dine together or the retinue of a leader who frequently hosts banquets for his followers. There is however no evidence in Homeric epic that those who lived and fought together in war also customarily

dined together at home, and by contrast some evidence that war bands included men with whom the leaders had little, if any, peace-time contact. Nor is there only one type of feasting in Homer, but a wide range including public sacrificial feasts for the whole community (*Od*. 3.4-9; 20.276-8), wedding and funeral banquets for large groups of people, 'drinking parties' (*eilapinai*) about which we know nothing, shared meals (*eranoi*) to which each diner brings his own food and drink (*Od*. 4.621-4), and finally meals hosted by one of the *basileis* for his peers, some of which are apparently held at public expense. Indeed, a crucial indication of being recognized as a *basileus* is that one is invited by 'everyone' to the 'meals which a man who administers justice ought to attend'.[67] It is significant that at this type of feast, the best attested in the epics, diners are gathered in their capacity as decision-makers, 'elders' and judges for the community, not as a war band or military retinue.[68]

Otherwise, one could point to the carrying of swords and spears as part of 'civilian' dress as an element of a 'warrior culture', and to the practices of hunting and horse-rearing as having possible military significance. 'Bearing iron' did go out of fashion in archaic Greece,[69] but the latter practices continued to be key part of the elite lifestyle, and it may be noted that already in Homer they contain a striking element of displaying wealth as opposed to practical military significance. Thus, recreational hunting involved beaters and hounds (*Od*. 19.428-58), and hounds were kept as 'table dogs … kept for show' as well (17.309-10). In the *Iliad*, one leading man is said to have owned 22 horses but left them all at home for fear that they would not get enough fodder in war (5.193-203), which ties in with the remarkably luxurious diet imagined for Hector's horses: wheat and wine, rather than barley and water (8.188-9). Hector himself, incidentally, comes home to a hot bath (*Il*. 22.442-6), later regarded as an indulgence, but a normal part of the heroic lifestyle (e.g. *Od*. 8.248-9).

While the focus of the poems, when it is not on war, is on the leisure pursuits of the elite, it emerges that upper-class men also spend a good deal of time ensuring the productivity of their estates. Of the four sons of Aigyptios, one went to war, one spent his days feasting, but the other two 'always preserved the ancestral farm' (*patrôia erga*, *Od*. 2.17-22). Telemachos expects that it may be '11 or 12 days' before anyone questions his absence from home (2.373-4), because they will assume that he is out of town visiting estates and livestock, some of which are across the sea on the mainland (4.630-40; 14.100-2). There is a hint of criticism – from a slave – of those 'do not come to the farms and flocks at all often but stay in town' (16.28-9), and even sons of kings regularly spend time with the herds,

presumably supervising and helping their slaves.[70] Laertes took an active interest in newly developing a large orchard in his younger days, and retires to it in old age, doing some planting while the slaves do the heavier work (24.205-31, 336-44). Odysseus displays notable wood-cutting and craft skills by building his own elaborate bed, bedroom and ship (5.234-62; 23.184-202). That this is not merely epic fiction is implied by the numerous vivid similes drawn from farming, herding and wood-cutting, which suggest that these activities played a part in the lives of elite audiences.[71]

Finally, Homer's heroes spend time travelling abroad on diplomatic or 'trading' missions or simply to make friends and receive gifts from hosts, and they in turn receive visitors from abroad and make gifts to them. Having a lavish supply of 'soft' bedding for visitors is explicitly a distinguishing mark of a rich man as opposed to a 'pauper' (*penichros*, *Od*. 3.346-55; cf. 24.188-95), while the difference between a respected guest and a beggar is that the latter can only 'ask for scraps, not swords or cauldrons'.[72] The difference is one of degree, however, not categorical, despite the modern notion, based on ethnographic parallels, that metal and other 'treasure' circulated in a separate 'prestige' sphere of gift-exchange and could not be traded for staples and other ordinary commodities, so that gifts were given and received purely for their symbolic value and exchanged within a closed circle of aristocrats. The epic evidence shows that no such segregation existed, so that one could convert agricultural surplus into valuables and treasure into food, and it was possible to seek material 'profit' (*kerdos*) as well as status in the exchange.[73]

Overall, then, the 'warrior culture' element in the elite lifestyle is quite small, even if the heroes do engage in frequent warfare and raiding, and even if martial prowess is an important part of their image. There is simply a gap between 'differentiating' and 'legitimating' values: the latter might suggest a life and culture dedicated to war but the former prescribe a life of leisure activities much like those of later Greek elites: sport and games; dining and drinking; making music and dancing; hunting and travelling. Nor is it clear that this elite lifestyle has many, or any, specifically 'aristocratic' features. It is important that the 'privilege' of *basileis* is defined not only by hereditary 'honour from Zeus' and by 'the gift of the people' but also by the recognition of peers as shown through invitations to dinner. But equally important is the implication that young *basileis* who lose their fathers and their property will no longer be invited (*Od*. 11.184-7), but at best tolerated as beggars and at worst chased away from the meal (*Il*. 22.487-99). Such downward mobility surely

implies the possibility of upward mobility, and the inclusion of newly wealthy and powerful men into the circle of *basileis*, and into elite social circles generally.[74] Even if these social circles were exclusive, the lifestyle itself would be open to everyone sufficiently rich: the amount of time spent in leisure pursuits, the quantities of meat and wine consumed, the hot baths, soft beds and lavish gifts offered to guests, do all require a great deal of wealth.

Moreover, the differentiation in lifestyle is not absolute, but a matter of degree. We have no reason to think that poorer men did also not dine and drink with friends, less often and less lavishly. Hesiod advises that one should at least sometimes entertain guests (*W&D* 715), cheerfully attend meals with many guests, and remember that a meal 'at common expense is most charming and least expensive' (722-3). Hesiod advises against spending time watching legal disputes in the *agora* (*W&D* 29-30), but the emphasis is on legal disputes rather than avoiding the *agora* altogether, and it is clearly open to all to spend time there, although perhaps only the *basileis* have seats on stone benches.[75] 'Countless' people, 'a large crowd', watch the elite compete in sports and perform dances in public (*Od*. 8.109-10; *Il*. 18.590-606). The superiority of the elite's sporting and dancing skills is emphasized, but we can hardly assume that the common people do not exercise or dance at all: Achilles' soldiers throw the discus and javelin like the young *basileis* on Ithaca; a beggar knows how to box (*Od*. 18.34-117); grape-pickers sing and move rhythmically to lyre music (*Il*. 18.561-72). A slave complies with the code of hospitality so far as his means allow, and he also dresses in fundamentally the same way as his master, wearing a tunic and cloak and carrying a sword and spear, though of course his outfit is of poorer quality. Even a *basileus*' clothes are spun and woven at home by his wife and maid servants, but elite women are credited with superior weaving skills, and can afford expensive dyes.[76]

In sum, it proves hard to identify elements in Homer's picture of heroic society that are 'aristocratic' in any meaningful sense. Deserving of the name 'aristocratic' is only the principle that hereditary 'honour from Zeus', symbolized by the use of staff and perhaps bench, justifies the power of *basileis* to speak in formal assemblies and court sessions and to use force against those who disobey. This ideal is balanced by the notions that a *basileus*' position is also a 'gift' from the community, who will withhold their support if they see his power abused, and moreover contingent on recognition by peers, who may 'drop' him if he loses his wealth. Otherwise, the elite values the same qualities as the lower classes, and competes for superiority in ways which should benefit the community, even if competition

can turn violent and damage public interest. At the same time, the elite differentiates itself by a leisured lifestyle which differs from that of the lower classes, but only by degree: there is no sign of sumptuary laws, separate 'spheres of exchange' or other mechanisms designed to create a categorically different lifestyle for the upper class – in contrast to the model of European aristocracies with, for instance, their monopoly on hunting and bearing swords.

'Aristocratic' values in archaic and classical Greece?

Our reading of the Homeric evidence has significant implications for the development of values in Greek history. It is commonly assumed that the crucial dynamic was 'aristocratic resistance against the encroaching authority of the *polis*' (Kurke 1999, 19). Either the elite tried to retain its 'Homeric' values against efforts by the wider community to impose a different code of behaviour, as in Finley's notion of the 'taming of the hero' (above), or the elite developed new sets of values in order maintain its distinctiveness and legitimacy under changing social and political conditions, as in Donlan's theory of an ideology that constantly shifted its ground as the community 'appropriated' for itself a version of Homeric ideals (1980, esp. 35-75). An alternative approach, developed by Ian Morris (2000, 109-91), argues that the values expressed in archaic Greek literature represent two competing ideologies *within* the elite, 'elitist' versus 'middling', of which the former built on Homeric notions of elite superiority while the latter advocated an egalitarian ethos derives from 'the values of ordinary citizens' (Morris 2000, 163). Despite the different dynamic, this is nevertheless in essence also a contest between ideals that set the elite apart and communal ideals that deny the elite an exceptional status or authority. This central opposition is clearly difficult to maintain if, first, there is no stark contrast between 'aristocratic' and community values in Homer after all, and secondly, as we suggested earlier, the development of the *polis* was in large part driven by the very elite that is supposed to be at odds with its ideals.[77]

Major developments in ideology and significant tensions between different sets of values certainly occurred in archaic and classical Greece, but it seems to us that many of these were not primarily created by the contest between elite and community, and that, where such a contest did play a role, we need to be much more precise about what was at issue.

Confusion or deliberate conflation of 'legitimating' and 'differentiating' values is one recurring problem with the approaches cited. The 'elitist' tradition as analyzed by Morris consists of two main elements: a claim to excellence in war, and a celebration of 'luxury'

(*habrosyne*). The 'middling' tradition has only one key theme: 'moderation' (*metriotes*) in deploying wealth or other assets. Martial excellence is supposed to legitimate elite privilege, as in Homer, and for Morris luxury and moderation are forms of legitimation, too. Luxuries, especially those imported from 'the east', elevate one's lifestyle almost to the level of gods, heroes and eastern rulers, and this association with powers beyond the city-state gives the elite an 'external' legitimation to rule (2000, 171-85). Moderation, by contrast, creates relative equality and implies that legitimate authority derives from the community of equal citizens (2000, 114-30, 161-71). The sources, however, never explicitly say that luxury and moderation, as opposed to martial excellence, play any part in legitimating power; this is a modern assumption, which fails to distinguish between differentiation and legitimation.

Insofar as the middling ideology plays down differences between citizens, it cannot legitimate difference in status or power. Even if Morris were right to posit that this ideology attributed ultimate authority to the citizen community, we would need explain on what basis these sovereign communities then delegated authority to ruling elites, before the development of democracy. The elite 'claimed leadership as special members of the *polis*', Morris suggests (2000, 163), but the nature of their specialness remains unexplained. What is more, Hesiod, regarded as the main archaic spokesman for middling values, does not link 'moderation' in lifestyle with the sovereignty of the citizen community, but accepts that 'the *basilees* have a divine right to settle disputes' (2000, 166). Compelled by the logic of his argument, Morris concludes that 'Hesiod's instructions call for the *basilees* to share power' with the community, and are oriented 'towards secular control of law and diminution of social hierarchy' (2000, 168), but this is clearly not true. Hesiod criticizes abuses of power only to remind the *basileis* to do better, not to challenge the legitimacy of their position. Hesiod's advocacy of a relatively austere lifestyle thus has no bearing on his views about legitimate power, which are as 'aristocratic' as anything we encounter in Greek literature. Nor is there any evidence that luxury is ever considered the basis for legitimate power, rather than a means of differentiating between levels of the social hierarchy.

Morris's argument that a fundamental change in Greek values occurs in the late sixth century BC when luxury loses its associations with higher powers and the elite accordingly loses most of the basis for claiming legitimate authority, leaving the citizen community as the only source of authority and paving the way for democracy, thus turns out to be highly questionable.[78] A shift away from luxury and towards moderation in material culture does

seem to happen at this time, but this is a matter of reducing the degree of differentiation in social status rather than a change in conceptions of legitimate power. The significance of the distinction may be illustrated, for example, by the consequences for Leslie Kurke's theory about aristocratic attitudes to coinage: she argued that by minting gold and silver coins late archaic Greek city-states appropriated for the community the authority that the possession of precious metal luxury goods had previously bestowed on the elite, and that in the face of this 'challenge', the elitist tradition responded by studiously ignoring the existence of coinage.[79] The argument is brilliantly made but based on a false premise. If gold and silver conferred status but not legitimacy, coinage did not undermine the authority of the ruling elite – who, in any case, were themselves largely responsible for minting.[80]

If this approach mistakes differentiating values for legitimating principles, the reverse mistake lies at the root of the idea that a fundamental change in values occurred much earlier and involved a transition of the upper class from a 'warrior elite' in Homer to a 'leisure class' in archaic Greece. This theory was developed by Walter Donlan and Oswyn Murray in particular,[81] surely with the parallel in mind of the European aristocracy as it lost its military dominance in the late Middle Ages and early modern period. They assume, as noted above, that the legitimating military ideals expressed in Homer also shaped elite behaviour and that the real-life elites of early Greece accordingly cultivated a 'warrior' lifestyle. In the seventh century, the rise of the hoplite phalanx reduced the military role of the elite, which therefore was forced to find new ways to legitimate its power and adopted a new lifestyle. If, however, as we have argued, Homer's heroes already differentiate themselves by a leisured lifestyle similar to that of classical elites, even as they legitimate themselves by claims of military excellence, then the opposition is false.

Changes in the culture of leisure certainly occurred, most famously and tangibly the new habit of reclining rather than sitting, but these may have been merely further developments within an already established system of differentiating values. As for legitimating ideals, even if the hoplite phalanx developed at the time and in the way suggested, which is a matter of dispute, the elite could still have continued to *claim* a superior military role and derive legitimacy from it, as Morris (2000, 171-8) argues they did. The continuing practice of single combat, the appointment of athletic victors as generals, and the battlefield tombs of individual war heroes (as opposed to collective burial of war dead) suggest that the 'warrior elite' *ideal* was still strong even in the early fifth century BC, whatever the actual nature of

archaic Greek warfare and whatever the military role of the elite at the time.[82] If one makes the necessary distinction between types of value, then, it seems possible that the ethos of the archaic elite remained essentially the same from Homer to the late archaic age at least.

In what sense, if any, was archaic and classical leisure-class culture 'aristocratic' in the sense that it was confined to an elite of birth, rather than adopted by all who afford it? If, as we have argued, closed hereditary elites were rare, never coincided with the entire social and economic upper classes, and elites did not impose sumptuary restrictions to exclude others from their lifestyle, there could be nothing 'aristocratic' about the values that shaped their way of life. It is especially unfortunate that scholars commonly speak of aristocratic values even in classical Athens, where, everyone agrees, the upper class did not consist exclusively of an elite of birth. Josiah Ober, for example, described a complex system of social stratification in Athens, where citizens were distinguished by education, by 'class', defined by wealth, and by 'status', defined by heredity, but insisted that dedication to sport, symposia, hunting and horse-raising was the hallmark of the hereditary status elite, 'the aristocracy', rather than the elite of wealth, even though 'much of the aristocratic pattern of behaviour was predicated on the possession of great wealth'.[83] Even if one were to accept for the sake of argument that such a hereditary elite existed in the classical age,[84] it would surely need to be demonstrated rather than assumed that these 'nobles' were able to exclude the non-noble but rich and educated elite from its way of life. The notion of 'aristocratic values', however, allows such presuppositions to slip in unchallenged.[85]

Abandoning the link between differentiation in lifestyle and legitimation by noble birth may solve problems of interpretation of which we will cite just one instance. A number of early fifth-century Athenian pots by the Pioneer group (Euthymides, Euphronios, Smikros, Phintias) feature scenes of named potters or painters in *gymnasia* and at *symposia* alongside high-status figures such as Leagros or Phayllos. On the assumption that only 'aristocrats' took part in symposia, Richard Neer (2002) argued that such images, implying social or erotic connections between upper-class athletes and low-status craftsmen, were deeply shocking. He concluded that these painters were playing elaborate games: by putting 'artisans' in transgressive social situations, but also deliberately mixing in ambiguities, they managed to suggest at once the possibilities and the impossibilities of social mobility.[86] But such complex interpretations are not needed if we accept that sympotic and athletic activities were not exclusive to the 'aristocracy' and that, at least by the late sixth century,

the highly-skilled craftsmen who provided increasing numbers of symposiasts with their fine ware were sufficiently wealthy and upwardly mobile to share these social occasions with members of the elite, like the poets who might provide their entertainment.

This otherwise obvious conclusion is hard to draw if one has in mind a medieval nobleman, too far removed socially from a craftsman to dine and drink side by side with him, but much less problematic if we think of men of established wealth socializing with the newly rich. 'Those who learn a craft, and their offspring, are less honoured (*apotimoterous*) than other citizens, while those who refrain from manual labour are deemed noble (*gennaious*)', according to Herodotus (2.167), and Aristotle argued that in what he calls an 'aristocracy', i.e. a political system which awards 'honours' 'on the basis of excellence and merit', craftsmen could by definition not have full citizen rights. But Aristotle also said that craftsmen could very well hold office under an oligarchy, where positions of power were allocated on the basis of wealth, 'because the majority of craftsmen, too, are rich' (*Pol.* 1278a19-25). Wealth could evidently outweigh the social stigma attached to the profession, and that may be what we see happening in the vase-paintings, too. Theognis often warned against associating with 'bad men' – 'Do not socialize with bad men (*kakoisi de mê prosomilei*), but always deal with the good: drink and eat among them, and sit among them, and please them, whose power is great'[87] – but such warnings imply that sharing a symposion with companions of lower status was a real possibility.

Not only at symposia but even in marriage alliances, Theognis complained, 'wealth dilutes descent', as the 'good' marry the 'bad but rich' (183-96, 1112); archaic poetry is full of laments about limitless and excessive striving for wealth. Rather than infer that 'aristocratic values' rated descent and personal excellence more highly than wealth, we should again make the distinction between legitimating and differentiating values. The elite might legitimate itself with claims to superior birth and merit, but its distinctive lifestyle was based on superior wealth, and in order to excel they needed to acquire as much property as they could and make as many wealthy friends and allies as possible. Competitive acquisitiveness was thus an integral part of the elite value system, and the poets reflect on the friction between this and other values. Yet 'greed' never features in modern lists of 'aristocratic' values, not even among scholars who do recognize that Homer's heroes have an 'almost overpowering accumulative instinct' (Finley 1954, 121-2) and that in antiquity at large we find a 'ravenous hunger for acquisition in the upper strata' (Finley 1973, 56).

Instead, the emphasis in such discussions has been on the limitations on the pursuit of wealth and profit by the elite, on the 'embeddedness' of economic activity in antiquity which meant that other, more 'aristocratic', values shaped the acquisition and consumption of wealth. For Homer in particular, it has been said that the material value of wealth counted for little compared to its symbolic value, as proof of physical prowess, and that the main purpose of accumulating wealth was to give it away, so that generosity rather than greed was the dominant value. For ancient elites in general, it has been stressed that 'status' was a key factor shaping economic activities and decisions, forcing the elite to derive its income mainly from landed wealth, as the most respectable form of property, to avoid association with profits from crafts or trade, and to use wealth primarily in conspicuous consumption rather productive reinvestment.[88] It is no doubt true that there were such moral pressures, but similar pressures also operate in modern, supposedly 'disembedded', economies: some sources of income are more respectable than others, many forms of wealth serve as status symbols, and conspicuous consumption is everywhere to be seen. The question is why the status-bound constraints are given more weight than the basic acquisitive drive in so many modern discussions.

The answer may once again lie in the assumption that ancient 'aristocracies' share the values of medieval and modern aristocrats, traditionally seen as in radical opposition to the commercial values of the bourgeoisie. To quote *The Communist Manifesto* one more time:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has … left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm … in the icy waters of egotistical calculation (Marx and Engels 1848, 6-7).

The same sentiments are subsequently encountered in classic works of sociology that treat the profit-motive as an invention of modern capitalism. Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le don* asserted that 'it is only our Western societies that quite recently turned man into an economic animal [*homo oeconomicus*][89] … It is not so long now since [man] became a machine – a calculating machine' (1925, 74). Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* went even further and claimed that 'the absence of the motive of gain' characterized all pre-industrial societies; 'the premium set on generosity is so great … as to make any other behaviour than that of utter self-forgetfulness simply not pay' (1944, 47). So both because

they were aristocrats, not bourgeois, and because they lived before the industrial revolution, ancient elites, it is assumed, must have shunned profit-making and accumulation.

Such attitudes did exist in antiquity, but they were only one end of a spectrum. Aristotle's ideal was for a man to have an ample 'natural' income from land, livestock and other resource, cultivated by 'natural' slaves, and to confine his economic activity to making decisions about how to *use* his revenues, limiting exchange to a necessary minimum, and dedicating the rest of his time to 'politics or philosophy' (*Politics* 1255b35-7; 1256a11-39; 1258a19-39). But he conceded that others saw 'so-called money-making' (*chrematistike*) as the essence of economic activity (*Pol.* 1253b12-14), which was concerned with acquisition rather than use of wealth (1256a11-13) and relied on exchange to make profit (1257b20-2): 'some think that the goal of household management (*oikonomia*) is unlimited increase (*auxesis eis apeiron*) of property in the form of coins' (1257b38-41). Not only traders, money-lenders and craftsmen engaged in 'money-making', but also landowners, who knew when and how to sell produce and livestock 'advantageously' (*lusiteleis*, 1258b12-22).

Rather than assume that Aristotle's ideal of a 'natural' economy represents an 'aristocratic' norm while 'bourgeois' acquisitiveness was for middle or lower classes, we should accept that there was a genuine tension within the value system of the elite – and of the non-elite - regarding wealth. Not to concern oneself with acquisition at all was the ultimate demonstration of wealth and 'moderation', but open-ended acquisition was necessary to compete with others. The story of how Alcmeon became rich by exploiting an offer from king Croesus of as much gold he could carry, loading and stuffing himself until he staggered out of the treasury 'looking anything but human' (Herodotus 6.125), for example, may seem a hostile account of a breach of 'aristocratic' ideals of generosity and physical beauty, and the author as slyly critical of a family whose reputation he ostensibly defended (6.121-31). But we could take it instead as a reflection of an acquisitive ideal, as genuine praise for Alcmeon's willingness to endure short-term personal embarrassment in order to lay the foundations for long-term family wealth which made the Alcmeonids 'mightily illustrious' and funded an Olympic chariot victory that brought reflected glory to the city of Athens.[90] As the Aristotelian ideal of natural householding 'embedded' some aspects of economic behaviour, so the ideal of unlimited acquisition may have 'disembedded' certain aspects of social behaviour.

Finally, we cannot take for granted that the elite lifestyle was absolutely exclusive rather than merely relatively lavish, that elite values created a categorical distinction between the upper and lower classes, rather than a hierarchy of status which extended to the lower classes as well. It is unlikely that 'luxuries' and staple goods were sharply distinguished, or that only the leisure class had access to luxury goods: surely even at lower economic levels social distinctions could be made by occasional use of relatively expensive imported cloth, scented oil and wine or a few pieces of higher-quality pottery or furniture.[91] The less wealthy may thus have been able to hold occasional modest symposia of their own. A domestic assemblage found in the Persian destruction deposit of Agora Well J 2:4 suggests that by the early fifth century even 'middling' households in Athens might regularly engage in *symposia* : this smallish household had possessed several sets of drinking cups and bowls (*kylikes* and *skyphoi*) along with other sympotic equipment, much of it figured, whose decoration may reflect the house- owner's interests in athletic and sympotic practices (see Lynch 2011). Participation in sport, dance and song at public festivals in classical Athens must also have extended well beyond the leisure class, and Athens had public gymnasia which made recreational sport possible for those who only had occasional leisure and no private facilities. Indeed, stories about highly successful athletes of lower-class origins suggest that sporting talent was a possible avenue of upward social mobility.[92]

The symposion, sport and other elements of the leisured lifestyle were thus not 'aristocratic' phenomena at odds with the ideology of the (democratic) city-state, but an integral part of the activities and associations that helped constitute the community, and indicators of relative status within it. Some drinking circles might form political clubs opposed to the current regime or private gatherings aggressively asserting their social and economic superiority through acts of drunken *hybris*, but dining and drinking groups were in themselves a crucial part of community life. 'No state of affairs is more pleasing than when happiness (*euphrosyne*) prevails among the entire people (*demos*), and diners sit in a row at home listening to a singer … That, to my mind, is the most beautiful thing', according to Homer's Odysseus (*Od*. 9.5-11), and other archaic poets echo the sentiment.[93]

We are left with very few indications of 'aristocratic values' in the strict sense in archaic and classical Greece. The Homeric concept of hereditary 'honour from Zeus' which entitles a family to govern and use force against any who resist may be reflected in the story that 'the Penthilidae at Mytilene went around beating people with clubs' until Megacles and his

supporters overthrew their 'lordly power' (*basilike dynasteia*), c. 600 BC (Aristotle, *Politics* 1311b26-9). The story suggests that they legitimated themselves in much the same way as Homer legitimates the power of Agamemnon, from whom they claimed descent via his grandson Penthilus, founder of their city, but also that by the late seventh this ideology was no longer accepted in Mytilene and attempts to enforce it were rejected as mere *hybris*. Whether the other possible hereditary elites attested in archaic Greece justified their rule in the same way, we do not know.[94] Nor do we have much evidence for how the wider concept of 'good birth' or 'good family' was used in archaic Greece, but in classical Athenian ideology it played much the same role as in Homer, i.e. the particular achievements, reputation and wealth of one's family and forebears were a factor that affected one's personal status but did not form the basis for any categorical claim to hereditary privilege. Even a person of low status could claim to be from a 'good family' in this relative sense, if for instance his father had a good reputation for being a 'decent' man even if he was poor. There is therefore no reason to regard allusions to good birth and collective autochthony in Athenian political discourse as evidence that 'aristocratic values' had become 'democratized'.[95]

Otherwise, elite status continued to be legitimated by appeals to superior personal merit, as the language of *aristoi* and *esthloi* against *kakoi* and *deiloi*, 'good, fine men' against 'bad, worthless men', implies. It is a logical extension of this conception that one would call all citizens *kaloikagathoi* if one wanted to make a point about political equality (Lysias 30.14; Ober 1989, 260). As noted, the elite may have continued to claim superior martial prowess at least until the early fifth century, regardless of changes in warfare, and presumably continued to claim personal superiority in other fields as well, at least until and unless they lost their decision-making and judicial privileges. A major new form of excellence which arose in the late sixth century with the development of public finance was willingness and ability to spend money on the community, through taxes, liturgies or donations. In classical Athens this seems to have become the single most important legitimation of elite status, so that one can speak of a distinct 'liturgical class' within the leisured elite. The development was important but it did not involve, as has been suggested, a structural change in the source of legitimate authority whereby the status of 'aristocrats' was for the first time determined by the community rather than their peers. It was, rather, a change of emphasis within a value system already found in Homer, where the elite's claims to personal excellence are judged by the community as a whole, as well as their peers.[96]

The strategies of differentiation adopted by the elite continued to centre on the display of wealth and leisure, as we have seen, and after Homer we see a trend towards ever more elaborate display, as well as criticisms of excessive luxury and attempts to restrict it. Insofar as one can maintain a distinction between 'elitist' and 'middling' ideologies, their concern is essentially with the question of how far one should go in accumulating wealth and in displaying it. In archaic poetry, the emphasis is either on the joys of living in luxury or on the importance of not resorting to violent and illegal ways of becoming rich; in classical Athenian authors, the emphasis is rather on 'moderation' in displaying wealth, which ties in with the new legitimating ideal of spending money on the community, voluntarily or in dutiful fulfilment of compulsory liturgies and *eisphora* levies. If archaic Greek society was as sharply divided between rich and poor as our sources suggest, the differentiation in lifestyle will have been equally sharp. However, when a class of independent working farmers and craftsmen emerged, whether in the late sixth century as we have suggested or earlier as others have thought, they will have adopted as much of the elite's lifestyle as they could afford; when public funding in classical Athens made it possible, people still lower down the economic scale also participated in this lifestyle to a degree. Since this lifestyle was never formally exclusive, we are not dealing with 'aristocratization' of the lower classes, or 'democratization' of aristocratic values: it was a matter of changes in the distribution of wealth allowing more people to pursue generally accepted ideals.

Intense competitiveness was always liable to create problems, but what Finley called the 'taming of the hero' was not so much a process of controlling the aristocracy as the strengthening legal and social mechanisms to contain violence over honour and property at *all* levels of society – even if such conflicts were of course most serious when they erupted between families with the greatest resources and the highest honours at stake.

Alternatives to aristocracy: understanding ancient social history

If aristocracy and aristocratic values in the full sense were rare in the ancient world, and if the commonly used broader, looser senses of these terms are seriously misleading, we must consider better ways of describing and analysing ancient social structures. One important corrective to casual assumptions about aristocracy is the approach adopted by Alain Duplouy in his *Le prestige des élites* (2006), which treats status in the ancient Greek world as essentially fluid and contested, and envisages every individual as engaged in a constant

effort to construct a position of 'prestige' for himself or herself. Everyone's actions, demeanour, associations and possessions are geared towards gaining 'social recognition' of the status to which one aspires. In his book, Duplouy brilliantly analyses a wide range of means, material and other, by which Greeks staked such claims to status; in his chapter in our volume, he goes on to demonstrate in detail that even noble birth is not a 'given' but constructed with the aid of an entire toolkit of 'gentilician strategies', which aim to get one's claim to hereditary excellence and privilege accepted as widely as possible. We must surely accept that at the most fundamental level a person's social status is not fixed but constantly negotiated in his or her interactions with wider groups and communities – in all societies, not only in ancient Greece. A microscopic analysis, as one might call it, of individual status can do a great deal to explain the nature and development of historical societies, and perhaps especially its material culture (see for instance Mariaud, this volume).

Except in small-scale and simple societies where all status positions are informal and all forms of superiority are achieved by personal effort, however, a study of social inequality needs to extend beyond the level of the individual. In larger, more complex societies one may find formal social hierarchies of 'rank' in which certain status positions are institutionalized rather than created *ad hoc*, and in which status is often 'ascribed' by convention or law as opposed to 'achieved', which places certain formal constraints on the creation of personal standing. The most complex societies, in the developmental schemes of evolutionary anthropologists, are 'stratified' rather than 'ranked': in addition to personal status differences, informal and formal, distinctions exist between two or more unequal groups. Even in a stratified social hierarchy, one's individual position still requires constant and intensive maintenance, of course, on pain of losing face, but if we are to understand social inequality fully we must also study the formation of hierarchies of status *groups*.

An important, but under-researched, question is how stratified communities came into existence in the ancient world. The traditional assumption that aristocracies existed throughout the Early Iron Age meant that the only question asked was how the nobility managed to reduce the power of the king by the time the city-state emerged. Those who more recently argued for the existence of egalitarian or 'ranked' societies prior to the rise of the *polis* have not gone very far in developing a model of how or when ranked chiefs became an 'aristocracy' or at any rate an upper class.[97] The archaeological evidence for Greece before c. 800 BC suggests small-scale communities with only a few leading men, and

accordingly it seems likely that the development of stratification, rather than the overthrow of an old elite, went hand-in-hand with the formation of the city-state. The growing number of burials elaborate enough to be archaeologically visible in Central Greece and Italy in the late eighth century, for example, may in this light be interpreted as reflecting, not the broadening of an existing elite (let alone mere population growth), but the first emergence of stratified communities in the Early Iron Age.[98]

For ancient societies which had reached this level, our question must be what kinds of social stratification existed and what concepts are more useful than 'aristocracy' in analysing social inequality. We have so far used 'upper class' and 'lower class' loosely, as colloquial terms which avoid the misleading connotations of 'aristocracy' and 'commoners', but these concepts are themselves quite vague, and we should consider the usefulness of 'class' in the more technical, economic, sense pioneered but sadly not defined by Karl Marx. Among ancient historians, 'class' has been notably defended by Geoffrey De Ste Croix (1981, 31-111), and most recently by Peter Rose (2009; 2013, 1-55), against Moses Finley's brusque rejection of the concept as 'not very sensible' (1973, 49). The upshot of the Marxist argument for class as an analytical concept is that property is the single most important factor in the creation of social inequality, that inequalities in property create relations of exploitation, and that 'class struggle' between exploiters and exploited is single most important dynamic shaping historical developments. The main objection raised by Finley is that in the ancient world distinctions of informal 'status' or juridical 'order' in practice outweighed objective common interests based on 'class' position (1973, 45-8, 50-1); by implication, status rivalry rather than class conflict dominated ancient history.

It is unfortunate that the debate has been cast in such polarized terms, since it seems more fruitful to give class and status equal billing, to analyze the relation between them, and to explore the conditions under which one rather than the other becomes dominant.[99] This avoids the weaknesses of both approaches. Finley surely went too far in insisting that elite ideologies concerning the acquisition and use of wealth truly shaped elite behaviour to the extent that economic position was always of secondary importance in social hierarchy (1973, 51-61). For example, his discussion of how Roman contempt for professional money-lending meant that the likes of Brutus could only lend money as a furtive amateur side-line to their main career as men of politics and leisure (1973, 53-7) seems to miss spectacularly his own point that the Roman elite was nevertheless involved 'in moneylending on a

stupendous scale' (53) and that this was not a matter of occasional 'abuse' but of 'something structural in the society' (55). Evidently the ideology of status in this instance did very little to inhibit Brutus and his peers from exploiting their 'class' position to the hilt.[100]

On the other hand, a Marxist insistence that only class is an analytically useful category quickly runs into the problem that ancient history features conflicts between groups that do not apparently stand in economic opposition to one another. De Ste Croix's argument that there were several 'classes' within each main 'class' – he considered but rejected the label 'sub-classes' (1981, 42, 116) – is feeble, since on his own view there is no difference in economic interests, let alone a relation of exploitation, between for instance the Roman senatorial and equestrian orders, which nevertheless clashed during the late Republic (ibid.). Similarly, both De Ste Croix and Rose take the conventional view that the major social struggle in early Greece was between the aristocracy and the 'middle class' of independent working farmers, yet this is not easy to fit within the framework of a class struggle: it is in the nature of the latter's independence that they were property owners and that their labour was not exploited by the elite, so that in terms of class the two social groups were on the same side of the divide. One might envisage a sort of pre-emptive class struggle, with independent farmers fighting to prevent falling into dependency, but it is far from clear that this is what these scholars have in mind, let alone that this is what happened.[101] It is preferable, therefore, to accept the validity in principle of both 'class' and 'status' and to analyze how and why each of these forms of stratification developed, and how they diverged or coincided in any given time and place.

Class in essence divides society into three groups: those whose income derives essentially from the labour of others; those whose income derives from their own independent labour; and those whose income derives from labour performed for others.[102] Or, to simplify and modernise still further: employers, self-employed and employees – bearing in mind that 'employers' may rely on coercion and that 'employees' include slaves. Clearly these classes are likely to exist in any stratified society, even where people do not consciously identify themselves as members of a class, and even where relations between them are not openly antagonistic. Whether in the ancient world self-conscious economic classes ever did emerge, and engaged in open conflict, is a key point of debate. By contrast, a 'status group' is by definition self-conscious and consists of those who regard one another as peers in terms of 'social honour' or 'prestige'; it may be an informal peer group, an institutionalized 'order'

with legal privileges, or even a 'caste'.[103] Wealth is usually an important element of status, but 'prestige' may create a wide social distance between degrees of wealth or kinds of wealth, even if the owners are objectively in the same 'class'. Moreover, criteria other than wealth may play a decisive role in creating the peer group or order: descent, education, skills, or fundamental legal distinctions between free and unfree, citizen and alien. That such distinctions existed in the ancient world is of course not in doubt, but a key question remains whether in antiquity the status hierarchy which separated people influenced their behaviour more, or less, than the basic economic positions which they shared.

As it happens, class and status coincide at a key point in the social hierarchy characteristic of the ancient world where they separate the propertied classes from the rest of the community: those who owned enough property to be able to live off the labour of others were not just an objective economic class but also a self-conscious status group insofar as they adopted a shared leisured lifestyle. Instead of either 'aristocracy', or 'propertied class', therefore, the most apposite label for an elite of this kind is surely 'leisure class' – a term coined by Thorstein Veblen in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899),[104] used repeatedly in our preceding discussion, and adopted by a few ancient historians, but not widely or systematically deployed.[105] The most prominent means by which ancient elites converted their economic assets into personal status was a life of 'conspicuous leisure' (Veblen 1899, 41-60), and they typically converted personal status into status-group membership by forming peer relations through the dinner parties, drinking sessions and other shared leisure activities we have discussed. As we have argued, this lifestyle was not wholly exclusive, and it allowed for differentiation of status within the propertied classes. It should also be stressed that 'leisure' (*scholê*, *otium*) was often emphatically distinguished from mere 'idleness' and indeed that there was 'toil' even in leisure, in the form of close supervision of slave labour or vigorous sporting exercise which contributed to military training. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the dividing line between those who could and those who could not afford a life of leisure was fairly clear, and crucial.

This dividing line was sometimes institutionalized so as to form a juridical 'order', in the form of one or more property classes with legally defined rights and obligations. We have already mentioned the high property thresholds for full citizen rights in the Solonian system at Athens, the 'Lycurgan' system at Sparta and the 'Servian' system at Rome, and suggested that these levels were set so high to include the leisure class but exclude everyone of lower

economic status. Scholars have tended to regard such systems of classification as merely administrative constructs which allocated a narrow range of political rights and military and fiscal obligations, rather than as meaningful status groups in social life. The Solonian and Servian hierarchies indeed seem to have become somewhat detached from social and economic realities by the time our sources mention them, but may originally have reflected these more closely. In Athens, they were meaningful enough for a certain Anthemion to dedicate a statue group of himself (or his father) and a horse on the Athenian Acropolis to mark his rise from the lowest to the second-highest property class (*Ath.Pol*. 7.4). In Sparta, where the property requirement was enforced by means of compulsory contributions to public messes, the system certainly had a major impact on social relations: it created a clear-cut distinction between those who could and could not afford a life of leisure, and created a culture of 'austerity' which minimized opportunities to display differences of wealth and status within the leisured citizen elite.[106]

Moreover, the lowest 'orders' in each of these systems were 'working' classes: the *thetes*, 'hired labourers', in Athens; the helots in Sparta; and the *proletarii*, a name implying that children were their only asset, in Rome. If we take these names seriously, rather than as gratuitous insults, it would seem that the lowest orders also coincided with economic classes. In Solonian Athens, we may even have an instance of open class conflict, resolved by formalizing the political rights of the leisure class by means of the property-class system formalizing, while relieving the 'burdens' of exploitation for the *thetes* through the cancellation of debt and prohibition of enslavement for debt.[107] More generally, if we are right to suggest that free, hired labour was more prominent in the ancient world than has traditionally been assumed, it becomes possible that class struggle, in the full Marxist sense of conflict between exploiter and exploited, was a factor in for instance the many civil wars between 'rich' and 'poor' which devastated many parts of the classical Greek world.

Other informal status distinctions and formal orders did not coincide with 'class' boundaries. The Roman senatorial and equestrian *ordines* were more exclusive 'orders' within a wider leisure class; the *nobilitas* was an informal 'status' group with the highest 'order' (Finley 1973, 45-48, 51); citizenship in both Greece and Rome formed an 'order' which cut across both class and status distinctions (47-8); slavery was a legal status which divided the working classes (49). Is it therefore entirely likely that many forms of social conflict were contests over status, but Finley surely went too far in arguing that this was

'invariably' so, and that no real class struggle is attested (68). When 'the people' of Syracuse made common cause with the native serf population against their rulers, for instance (Herodotus 7.155), we may well see a powerful status distinction being set aside on account of a shared class interest. And when the next ruler of Syracuse offered citizenship to the 'fat cats' (*pacheis*) of conquered neighbouring towns but sold their common people into slavery on the grounds that they were 'most unpleasant to live with' (7.156), we may have an example of class warfare on a large scale and of exceptional brutality. The vital point is not to prejudge the issue by rejecting one of category of analysis or another, but to assess the relative significance of each in any given historical context.

Finally, insofar as status groups, orders and classes are not just analytical entities but were self-conscious social groups, we ought to investigate how they operated. The forging of status groups through personal interaction, habitual socializing, intermarriage and collective enterprises among individuals who regard one another as approximate equals can in principle be analysed in the same microscopic way as the negotiation of individual status. Hosting and attending *symposia*, for instance, or engaging in sport and hunting, was not only a way to negotiate individual status, but also to create core social circles and networks which collectively formed a status group.[108] Innumerable more formal pseudo-kinship groups such as *patrai*, phratries, *gene¸ geneai* or *orgeones*, were also constantly being formed and reformed, and cemented their identities by sympotic and cultic activities. Some of these groups came to be accepted as semi-official bodies and regulated admission to membership of their *poleis*. Other cultic but not descent-based groups, often called *thiasoi* and *orgeones*, also met in sympotic gatherings. In some cases, formal cult- and (fictive) kinship-associations may (or may not) have been hierarchically-ordered and formed a significant component of social standing.[109] Property classes and other formal orders, including the citizen-body as a whole, may also sometimes have been more than abstract entities and have had public procedures to determine membership – such as the census of the Roman senate or the vote on the admission of new citizens to Athenian demes – and occasions on which members of the order assembled or even acted as corporate bodies.

A study of social hierarchy thus ought to ask questions about the number, size and nature of status groups within a community. Do we find a small or highly organized set of peers which forms a fully integrated corporate body, or larger or less structured groups which form numerous overlapping 'social circles', or even only loosely connected 'personal

networks'? How important was acceptance by or exclusion from such groups as a criterion of social status? How was acceptance won and lost? To what extent did these peer groups mark themselves out by distinctive ways of looking, speaking and behaving which serve to assert membership in the group as much as individual status? Such questions will not be easy to answer, but ancient historians have barely begun to try. An illustration of the kind of evidence one might explore are the stories about Themistocles' social climbing: he offered hospitality to a famous lyre-player so as to attract large numbers of visitors to his home, persuaded 'well-born youths' to exercise with him so as to raise the status of the gymnasium at Cynosarges, and set up a lavish tent at Olympia in which he hosted banquets deemed 'above his station' (Plut. *Them*. 1.3; 5.3-4). The other side of the coin may be illustrated by stories about the predicament of those who sought social or political benefits from associating with the elite but did not have the assets necessary to rate as peers and risked being scorned as 'flatterers' and 'parasites' by the rich and by other non-members of the elites alike.[110] The evidence for the formation of groups in social hierarchies is not as full as we would like, but it is yet another aspect of inequality that requires serious investigation.

Between the instability of the distribution of wealth and personal assets, the rival demands of legitimating and differentiating values, the competing pressures of status and class, and the multiplicity of status groups and orders, many factors conspire against the creation of stable elites in the ancient world, and indeed in all stratified societies. The existence of hereditary aristocracy therefore cannot be taken for granted as the historical norm, and where it does exist, the means by which it is maintained require close examination. The same is true of a stable leisure class, not least because it relies on forms of labour exploitation, including chattel slavery and other forms of coerced labour, which might have been expected to provoke resentment and resistance. The emergence of ruling elites within the social upper class is also liable to be a dynamic process of a succession of groups trying to monopolize power until they are overthrown by rivals, or until a political system is developed that is able to break the cycle and inhibit the accumulation of power and privilege in the hands of a small group, as in classical Athens. How social hierarchies grow and change is one of the key questions ancient historians, and historians at large, should address. To answer this question vaguely in terms of the supposed rise and fall or domestication of 'aristocracies' is never adequate, and, as we have suggested here and as

much of the remainder of this volume tries to show, is often simply wrong or deeply misleading.

Notes

[1] See recently also Osborne's rejection of applying the concept to ancient Greece (2009, 209-10), an addition made for the second edition of his book ('The idea that there was a set of people who thought that political power was their birthright and who associated only with each other, sharing a single "aristocratic ideology", is a modern fantasy'). Rose 2013, 52-5, expresses reservations ('the degree to which or the point at which they claim inherited excellence … needs to be closely examined', 53; cf. 63-76), but nevertheless freely applies the term to the elites of archaic Greece.

[2] Cf. Cannadine 1990, 8-16 on the British aristocracy whose decline his book charts; Powis 1984, 6-22.

[3] The British aristocracy was divided into three categories, preserved by primogeniture: a very few titled peers (dukes to barons – the 'grandees'), the baronetcy, and the untitled landed gentry; other European systems (e.g. France, Germany, Austro-Hungary, Russia) tended to have a much larger proportion of titled families, of varied levels of landed wealth and power. Cf. Cannadine 1990, 18-22.

[4] For the importance in US history of the initial determination of the settlers to dispense with feudal systems of land tenure and any concomitant dominance based on heredity, see e.g. Degler 1984, 2-6.

[5] Eastern European traditions may be different again: see e.g. Wecowski 2014, 21-3 on a model drawn from the nobility of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

[6] See e.g. Cornell 1995, 251-6; Forsythe 2005, 157-66; and Bradley, this volume.

[7] See the variously sceptical accounts of Carlier 1984; Drews 1984; Ogden 1997; Mitchell 2013.

[8] Bacchiadai: Hdt. 5.92; Paus. 2.4.4; Diod. 7.9; Strabo 8.6.20; Nikolaos of Damascus *FGrH* 90 F 57. Eupatridai: Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 13.2; Plut. *Thes.* 25.2. Penthilidai: Alkaios frr. 70, 75, 302; Arist. *Pol.* 1311b26-7; Neleidai: Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 52-3; Basilidai: Arist. *Pol*. 1305b19-21.

[9] See Keurentjes 1997. For challenges to the traditional view of the Eupatridai as a closed group of ruling families, see Figueira 1985; Duplouy 2003, and in this volume; for a spirited defence of aspects of the traditional view, see Pierrot, this volume.

[10] *Geomoroi* of Samos: Plut. *Mor.* 303e-304c; Thuc. 8.21; with Shipley 1987, 39-41, and Mariaud, this volume; *Gamoroi* of Syracuse: Hdt. 7.155; Arist. fr. 586 Rose; with Shepherd, this volume. *Hippeis* of Eretria: e.g. Ar. *Ath. Pol.* 15.2; *Hippobotai* of Chalcis: e.g. Hdt. 5.77.2.

[11] See e.g. Donlan 1980, 2-3, 9, 15-20. Rihll 1986 and 1993 for *basileis* as informal 'Big Men', whose status is based on personal achievement; Ulf 1990 for *basileis* as heads of households.

[12] Osborne 2009, 209; Van Wees 1992, 78-83, stressed the idealized nature of Homer's picture of social stratification, but nevertheless without sufficient justification treated heredity as the most realistic element, following Finley (1954/1977, 53, 59-60: see below).

[13] E.g. Figueira and Nagy 1985; Murray 1993, 221; Lane Fox 2000, 40-5.

[14] Van Wees 2000. Note that this reading of Theognis does not depend on the validity of the author's provocative comparisons with the self-representation of Sicilian and American *Mafiosi*. One might object that while Theognis represents a set of mainstream moral values, the moral judgements and language of *mafiosi* are at least in part counter-cultural insofar as their ideas of 'justice' or 'law' or 'family values' are at odds with those of the official state or respectable, law-abiding society.

[15] See e.g. Lane Fox 2000, 35-40, van Wees 2000, 52-3, on the setting and date of most of these poems. The poems omit specific references to names of individuals or groups tying it to historical Megara, and it is impossible to pin the grievances down to specific occasions or political institutions as the descriptions have been carefully generalized (in contrast, say, to the political poems of

Alcaeus). Hence some still follow Plato (*Laws* 630a) in the view that the poems concern Sicilian Megara, rather than, or as well as, that in mainland Greece.

[16] The main evidence is that his son-in-law Kylon attempted to acquire a tyranny of his own in Athens shortly before the lawgiving activities of Drako and Solon, probably c. 630.

[17] They probably had the three Dorian *phylai*, and there is some evidence for *komai* organized into five *mere* with (even more obscure) sub-groups called *hekatostys* (Plut. *Mor.* 295b).

[18] Bourriot 1976; Roussel 1976; more recently Lambert 1993; Davies 1996; also Duplouy, this volume.

[19] For the Attic *gene*, see also Lambert 1999 and Lambert, this volume.

[20] Cf. e.g. Powis 1984, 6-8, on the difference between ancient Greek and modern uses.

[21] E.g. at Thuc. 3.82.8, 8.64.3 we find the ideological claim of would-be oligarchs that they stood for a *sophron aristokratia*; at Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.47, Theramenes calls 'aristocracy' the 'good' oligarchy he is trying to preserve against Kritias' attempt to impose a narrower, harsher, rule; at *Hell.* 5.2.7 and 6.4.18 Xenophon is prepared to label the pro-Spartan oligarchy at Mantinea approvingly an 'aristocracy'; and at *Mem.* 4.6.12 he reports as Socrates' view that an aristocracy is where offices are held by those legally qualified, as opposed to oligarchy, rule by the rich, or democracy, rule by anyone; in Isocrates' *Panathenaikos* 131-2 any of the three constitutions (monarchy, oligarchy, democracy) can be 'aristocracies' if the most competent and able are in charge; in Plato's *Republic,* of course, aristocracy is the best form of government, rule by the philosophically educated with true knowledge, while in the *Statesman* it may be the term when the rich few rule in accordance with good laws (*Polit.* 301); Aristotle *Politics*, passim, esp. Books III-IV, defines his 'aristocracy' as rule by the few who are the best, in the interest of all, though he allows that some people use the term to mean rule by the rich or the 'notables' (*gnorimoi*; 1293b38-40). Comedy may treat it as a slogan used by fomenters of *stasis:* at Ar. *Birds* 125 'wanting an aristocracy' is a charge casually levelled at one who wants to live in a 'comfortable' city, and in a fourth-century comedy by Heniochus (fr. 5 K-A), two personified abstractions, Demokratia and Aristokratia, like *hetairai*, are seen dwelling among recently liberated Greek cities, disrupting them and causing them to behave drunkenly and foolishly.

[22] See e.g. the hints of fourth-century debates on what constituted 'good birth' (*eugeneia*) in the fragments of Aristotle's dialogue on the topic, frr. 91-94 Rose, which suggest pervasive uncertainty on whether 'good birth' involves long-established families holding positions of power or wealth, or old families famous for moral virtue. Signs of a vigorous lawcourt debate on *gennaiotes* emerge from the fragments of Iphikrates' speech against Harmodios on his grants or his statue (Lysias frr. 41-49 Carey), where Iphikrates contrasted his own noble deeds despite humble origins with Harmodios' unworthiness despite his descent from the tyrannicide. Aristotle quotes the saying 'there was nothing *gennaion* about Harmodios and Aristogeiton until they did a noble deed' (*Rhet.* 1398a15-22).

[23] See also on Xenophon's usage, Roscalla 2004, 115-24.

[24] Bourriot's attempt to identify a number of specific, localised meanings of the phrase (e.g. a Spartan notion of those who deserved honours for their exceptional military service, or at Athens the idea of 'good' people who supported moderate oligarchy as promulgated by Theramenes) is less successful than his critique of the previous orthodoxy.

[25] On Hesiod and the archaic economy in general, see Van Wees 2009.

[26] Cicero, *De Rep*. 2.36.61-37.63; Livy 4.1-6.

[27] See esp. Hodkinson 2000, esp. 399-445; and further discussion in van Wees, forthcoming 2015.

[28] See the chapters by Pierrot, Lambert, Sato, Fisher, Whitley, Mariaud and Shepherd.

[29] Finley 1973, 49, directed especially against H. Hill, *The Roman Middle Class* (1952) on *equites* as 'businessmen'; Ure 1922 is criticized by e.g. De Ste Croix 1981, 280; cf. 41-2, 120.

[30] Similarly on Rome, e.g. Brunt 1971, 47 ('*no doubt* property was *originally* concentrated more in the hands of the patricians'), 55 (in 445 BC 'evidently there were *now* plebeians rich enough' to challenge for power, though only 'a small class'; emphases added); on Greece, e.g. Finley 1970, 88, 97-8, 99, 103: 'the closed group of the landowning aristocracy' monopolized political power and

'controlled much of the land (and in particular the best land)'; 1983, 12-13 (early aristocracies formed 'an estate or order in a strict sense' and 'also possessed much of the wealth'); Rose 2013, 37-8, 82 ('ruling class' and 'aristocratic class' equated with 'large landowners'), 92 (relies on 'the *assumption* that the ruling class monopolized the best farmland'; emphasis added).

[31] The main exception is the theory of the rise of the hoplite middle class: see below.

[32] De Ste Croix 1981, esp. 114-16, 122-3; cf. Finley 1973, 40-1 ; 1983, 10-11. For Greece, see also e.g. Fisher 1976, 24-30; Davies 1981, 10-14; Ober 1989, 194-6; note that the 'liturgical' class in Athens forms only the richest section of the propertied/leisured class.

[33] De Ste Croix 1981, esp. 120-33; cf. Finley 1973, 52-61.

[34] 'The land was in the hands of a few' in Solon's Athens (*Ath. Pol*. 2.1, 4.5) and Eupatridai supposedly monopolized power, but no source equates the Eupatridai with the 'few' who owned land, and Solon's allocation of political privilege on the basis of wealth implies that there were many wealthy families outside the hereditary elite (if the latter existed). Patricians and land: Smith 2006, 235-50.

[35] Contra e.g. Finley 1983, 13: 'a number of outsiders acquired enough wealth' to demand a share in power; how they did so is 'wholly mysterious to us'; Ober 1989, 58: 'by the later seventh century, if not before, there was a noticeable group of individuals who were rich but not noble-born' – a slightly more cautious formulation, but still suggesting that these rich men were a minority and had emerged more recently than the Eupatridai.

[36] See van Wees 2009, 445-50; in response to Rose's 'shocked' rejection of this interpretation (2013, 169, 183-4, esp. n. 40), it may be worth pointing out that such an understanding of Hesiod's work does not imply that there were no badly exploited smallholders and hired labourers at the time, merely that Hesiod('s *persona*) was not one of the exploited but one of the exploiters.

[37] This is in effect the view adopted by Wecowski 2014, 19-26: early Greek 'aristocracy' is based on wealth (rather than heredity) as displayed in a certain lifestyle and acknowledged by peers; membership in this group is highly fluid ('precarious'). However, for reasons unclear to us, he insists that such an elite must nevertheless be called an 'aristocracy', not merely 'elite' or 'upper class' (23), and he continues to contrast 'old aristocracy' with '*nouveaux riches*' and 'parvenus' (esp. 75) – perhaps under the influence of his chosen parallel of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility.

[38] The idea that power struggles were largely confined to the propertied elite is now well-established (see e.g. Foxhall 1997; Van Wees 2006; Osborne 2009, 209-11 on Solon), but is not generally recognized that these may be struggles between distinct sections of the elite rather simply between individuals and their supporters for personal power. Also, an emphasis on intra-elite struggles is often unjustifiably combined with a dismissal of the struggles between propertied elite and lower classes: see Van Wees 2008; contra e.g. Cawkwell 1995; Anderson 2005.

[39] De Ste Croix 1981, 71, refused to use 'middle class'; Finley did sometimes use the term (1970, 98; see below), but elsewhere rejected the use of this concept (1983, 10-11).

[40] The major proponent of this model in more recent years, Victor Hanson, remedies this problem by suggesting that hoplite militias did include almost the entire free peasantry (his 'yeomanry'), not just its least poor sections; he assumes that militias constituted 'nearly half' of the citizen population (1995, 105, 114, 207, 213, 374, 479 n.6; but 'one-third to half' at 208-406), and thereby implies that hired (or dependent) labour made up the remaining 50% or more. This is not necessarily wrong, but constitutes a major departure from the Finley/De Ste Croix model, which is not defended in any detail but posited to rescue the notion of a farming 'middle class'.

[41] See in more detail Van Wees 2002b, 72-7; Morris 2000, 119, 161; Ober 1991, 119-20; cf. Finley 1983, 10-11, and Ober 1989, 27-31, denying that a distinct middle class existed in classical Athens.

[42] Greece: van Wees 2004, 37-8, 55-7; 2006; 2007. Rome: Livy 1.43; Dion. Hal. 4.16-18; Pliny *NH* 33.43; Aulus Gellius, *NA* 6.13.1; Festus 100L, with Rathbone 1993; Bradley, this volume.

[43] As argued in detail by Van Wees 2013a, contra the model proposed by Hanson 1995.

[44] A political role for archaic militias was questioned for both Greece and Rome by Snodgrass 1965; for Greece, see also Salmon 1977; Frost 1984; Snodgrass 1993; for Rome, see Cornell 1995, 179-90,

257; Forsythe 2005, 113-15; Smith 2006, 275-6; Bradley, this volume.

[45] Cf. Rose 2013, 79: 'I find highly misleading the widespread assumption … that in itself the rise of the *polis* entailed a threat to aristocratic *oikoi* … Rather we need to understand the polis as the creation of the aristocracy'.

[46] Finley 1973, 107-8 (naval service); De Ste Croix 1981, 24-5, 182 (mercenary service). See Van Wees 2013b, 23-8, 69-75, 74-5, 131-2, for the development of paid military, naval and public service.

[47] De Ste Croix 1981, esp. 210-18; cf. 114, 208-26, 269-75; Finley 1973, 73, 105-6, 114.

[48] Homer, *Iliad* 21.444-5; Hesiod, *W&D* 602-3: a male *thês* without his own household and female *erithos* without children are hired on a yearly basis (see West 1978, ad 602); Solon F 13.47-8. Stranded oarsmen: Xen *Hell*. 2.1.1 (100 ships, Chios), 6.2.37 (90 ships, Corcyra).

[49] See van Wees 2013a, 229-33; 2006.

[50] Finley 1959, 98-9, 114-15; 1960, 141-3, 149; 1964, 128-32; 1965, 155-6, 165-6; 1973, 69-70.

[51] Finley 1973, 84-94; De Ste Croix 1981, 243-53.

[52] Cf. Rathbone 1998.

[53] For discussions of 'heroic' values which largely follow Finley, see esp. Adkins 1960; Donlan 1980/1999, esp. 1-25; Murray 1980/1993, esp. 38-56.

[54] Note also Finley's comment on acts of mutilation in Homeric battles: 'what must be stressed about Homeric cruelty is its heroic quality, not its specifically Greek character' (1954, 119).

[55] Donlan 1980, 25; Murray 1980, 49. Rejection of feudal tenure: Finley 1957/1981, 221-3. See also e.g. Ulf 1990; Qviller 1981; Rihll 1993; van Wees 1992.

[56] Note for example that Donlan asserts that 'the aristocratic ideal is essentially the product of a particular class and not a national ideal' (1980, xvi), formulated 'both the prove the superiority of the upper class and to *impose* a particular set of values on the society as a whole' (xvii; emphasis added), and follows Finley in most essentials, even as he introduces the important new model of the 'ranked chief' (below) and rightly concludes that the overlap between aristocratic and wider ideals was 'not the result of the filtering down and acceptance by the many of the values of the few, but the reflection of a culture-wide homogeneity of values and attitudes which all Greeks shared' (178).

[57] The same applies to the analysis of Hesiod's *Works & Days*, typically taken to reflect lower-class values: hard work, self-sufficiency, justice and piety are not the only values to which he appeals, and we have no reason to think that these values appealed only to the lower classes.

[58] See e.g. Van Wees 1992, 126-38, on 'the ethics of anger' in the epics.

[59] For competitive public speaking, see also *Il*. 1.490; 2.370; 3.223; 15.283-4. For the value attached to 'good counsel' (*euboulia*) in Homer, see esp. Schofield 1986. For the kings' and elders' judicial roles, see also *Il*. 1.237-9; 2.203-6; 9.97-9, 156, 298; *Od*. 11.569-71; 19.109-14. Finley nevertheless insisted that one should not be 'misled' by 'numerous' references to 'good counsel' (1954, 115), and that 'despite some hints of royal justice', Homeric heroes were leaders in war and 'little else' (97).

[60] See also *Il*. 2.196-7 and 204-6 (all must obey Agamemnon because 'the spirit of a lord nurtured by Zeus is great, and his honour comes from Zeus, and wise Zeus loves him'; ' There must be one commander, one lord, to whom [Zeus] entrusted staff and laws in order to be lord among them'); 9.69, 97-9 (Nestor to Agamemnon: 'you are most lordly' (*basileutatos*); 'you are master of many men and Zeus entrusted you with staff and laws, so that you may make decisions for them'); 9.160-1 (Agamemnon: 'Let him submit to me insofar as I am more lordly (*basileuteros*) and older'). Staffs, Zeus, kings, and justice are also linked at *Il*. 1.237-9; 6.157-9; 9.156, 298; 18.503-6; *Od*. 11.569-71.

[61] Walter Donlan (esp. 1980/1999, 2-3, 18-19, 25) drew attention to the anthropological parallel of the 'chief', whose position is hereditary yet strongly dependent on popular approval of the way in which he acquits himself: 'high rank with its attendant honors was, in a real sense, still the gift of the community at large' (20). Note that kings are seen as acting on behalf of the community when they allocate 'prizes' from spoils or shares at public banquets: Van Wees 1992, 32-3, 294-310.

[62] Informal talk in *agora*: *Od*. 17.52-72; 20.144-6. Assembly: 2.1-259; 8.1-56. Court: 12.439-40.

[63] End at sunset: e.g. Od. 2.394-8; 15.452-81; 19.418-27; into the night: 8.417; 18.307-428. Sport and games: see below. Afternoon return to *agora*: 8.100-399 (sport and dance); 15.361-2, 466-8 (talk).

[64] All these sports except jumping, and with the addition of chariot-racing and armed combat, also feature in the funeral games for Patroclus, *Iliad* 23.

[65] Listening to epic: *Od*. 1.325-71; 8.62-92, 471-531. Song and dance at dinner: 1.150-9, 421-4; 17.605-6; 18.304-6; contra Wecowski 2014, 227-8, these passages are not at all 'ambiguous', and it can only be the guests who dance. Dancing to *Song of Ares and Aphrodite*: 8.250-369.

[66] Contra Wecowski 2014, 212-13 n. 115, the scene is set after dinner (*Il*. 9.70-94, 225-7), even if Achilles lays on more food and drink when visitors arrive (9.202-20).

[67] *Od*. 11.184-7; here, we are evidently to understand that underage Telemachus is invited to attend the feasts because his absent *father* is still acknowledged as a 'man who administers justice'.

[68] Homer suggests that such feasts are routine: a group of probably 12 *basileis* (*Od*. 8.390-1) 'always' drinks 'the wine of the elders' at Alcinoos' house (13.8-9), and such a session is in progress when Odysseus arrives (7.136-239). Agamemnon regularly hosts feasts for the leading men, also referred to as 'wine of the elders' (*Il*. 4.259-60), and these are once said to be 'at public expense' (*demia*, 17.249-50; cf. 4.343-4; 9.70-3) For a full discussion of Homeric feasts, see Van Wees 1995; also e.g. Wecowski 2014, 191-247, who however does argue for a 'warrior feast' being the norm in the heroic world of the past as imagined by the poet Homer, and separates out elements suggestive of the symposion as belonging to a different 'register' and reflecting the poet's contemporary world.

[69] See Thuc. 1.5.3-6.3, and the analysis of archaic iconography in Van Wees 1998, arguing that carrying swords went out of fashion c. 650 BC but carrying spears not until the late sixth century.

[70] See *Il*. 5.313; 6.25, 421-4; 11.101-6; 14.443-5; 20.90-2, 188-91; 24.29; *Od*. 13.221-5.

[71] Farming: e.g. *Il*. 5.499-502; 11.558-62. Herding: e.g. *Il*. 2.469-71; 16.641-3; 17.4-5; and two dozen similes featuring livestock attacked by wild animals, e.g. *Il.* 15.630-6. Wood-cutting: e.g. *Il*. 3.59-63; 11.86-9; 16.633-4; 17.742-5; 23.315-18.

[72] *Od*. 17.222; see in detail Van Wees 1992, 228-37, and 2002a.

[73] The theory of exchange spheres was mooted by Morris 1986, and is central to the arguments about aristocratic values of Kurke 1999 (esp. 12-23). The clearest evidence against it is *Od*. 22.55-9, where the suitors promise Odysseus 'to give you bronze and gold, making up for everything that has been taken from your house in drink and food, each man separately contributing the value of 20 oxen': the value of food and drink is paid for in gold and bronze, while the equivalence is calculated in terms of 'oxen-worth': see further Van Wees 2013b, 113, 132-3; 2002a; 1992, 222-7.

[74] See Van Wees 1995, 164-79; Wecowski 2014, 19-81.

[75] *Il*. 18.497-504; *Od*. 2.10-14; 3.406-12; 8.4-6.

[76] Slave's hospitality and dress: *Od*. 14.45-113, 410-56, 510-33. See van Wees 1998 (on bearing arms), 2005a (Homeric dress), 2005b (home production of cloth).

[77] As recognized by Kurke, who adopts the elitist-middling distinction and frequently speaks in terms of aristocracy/elite versus city/*polis*, but adds in a footnote: 'I do not intend to suggest thereby that "city" and "elite" are mutually exclusive categories (since, throughout the archaic period, it is almost certainly the elites which are running the cities)' (1999, 17 n. 46).

[78] Morris does not explain what happened to the elitist legitimating claim of military excellence, which he (rightly, see below) argued continued throughout the archaic period. For detailed critiques of Morris's model of values, see Hammer 2004; Kistler 2004.

[79] Kurke 1999, e.g. 22. She also argued that aristocrats resented coinage because it 'breaks down the distinction between spheres of exchange entirely' by making money a general measure of value by which 'all goods and services can be measured' (ibid.), but as noted above the notion that a separate aristocratic sphere of exchange ever existed is disproved by the evidence.

[80] Kurke stresses the association of coinage with tyrants in literature (1999, esp. 65-100), but it would be hard to argue that coinages were always introduced by tyrants in reality.

[81] Donlan 1980, 49-64; Murray 1980, 80 ('one of the most significant changes in Greek aristocratic life'); 1983; 1991; Wecowski 2014.

[82] Hdt. 6.92; 9.75 (pentathlete leads volunteer force and fights single combats during siege of Aegina, 491 BC); 9.105 (Athenian pankratiast excels in battle of Mycale, 479 BC, and gets

conspicuous burial near battlefield at Carystus a few years later). Note that, according to Krentz 2002; 2007; van Wees 2004; 2013a, the classical phalanx in any case only took shape in the early fifth century.

[83] Ober 1989, 257; see further 12, 248-92, and esp. 250-1 on aristocratic 'pastimes'. Similarly, Donlan 1980, 155-76, argued that this lifestyle was cultivated by classical Athenian 'aristocrats' *especially* when they lost their privileges and power.

[84] Ober believed that Eupatridai formed a hereditary elite in the seventh century (1989, 55-60), but see n. 8, above, and he favoured the idea that certain 'clans' (*genê*) enjoyed hereditary (ritual) privileges and status in classical Athens (252-6), for which see above, *ad* nn. 17-18.

[85] See for example Fisher 1998; 2009; Corner 2010; 2011; Wecowksi 2014, esp. 74-8, for arguments that athletic and sympotic activities and groups served to integrate new members into the elite.

[86] See Fisher, this volume, on similarly damaging assumptions of assumptions of a social chasm between athletes and their trainers.

[87] Theognis 31-4; also e.g. 35-7, 101-16, 411-12, 853-4, 955-6; *PMG* 897 (the Admetus song).

[88] On Homer, see again Finley 1954, 61-8; cf. Donlan 1980, 4-5 (acquisition of wealth 'not prompted by greed: such a motivation belongs to market economies'; by contrast, he attributes purely materialistic motives to the common man, 22). On the impact of status on wealth, see Finley 1973, 41-61, the start of an entire school of thought making 'embeddedness' (a term coined by Karl Polanyi, see below) a defining feature of the ancient economy. Finley, however, did not link these attitudes specifically with aristocrats, as does e.g. Ober: 'nobles were expected to refrain from participation in degrading occupations, such as manufacturing or commerce' (1989, 12, 273-9).

[89] However, he also spoke of the 'individualistic economy of pure [self-]interest which our societies have had to some extent ever since their discovery by the Greeks and Semites' (1925, 73).

[90] Croesus' reaction in the story is to laugh and double the value of his gift, surely a clear guide to the intended audience response: amused admiration rather than disgust. See further Van Wees 2002a, contra Kurke 1999, 142-6, citing earlier scholarship condemning the 'greed' of Alcmeon. The association with a king of Lydia is thought to be 'ironic' for a family that claimed to be hostile to tyrants, but Greek values were not so simple: a tyrant might be bad, but a powerful friend was good.

[91] See esp. Foxhall 1998 on 'semi-luxuries', noted by Morris 2000, 181, but not adequately incorporated in his model of 'luxury' as central to elite self-legitimation.

[92] See Fisher 1998; 2009; 2011; Christesen 2012, 155-60; contra Pritchard 2013.

[93] See esp. Solon fr. 4.9-10; Xenophanes fr. 1.13-24, with Fisher 1992, 70-1, 203-5; Schmitt-Pantel 1992; Corner 2011. Contra e.g. Murray 1990; Kurke 1999, 17-19 ('the symposium as a kind of anti-*polis*').

[94] Note also Tyrtaeus' legitimation of the Spartan kings in the late seventh century on the basis that 'Zeus himself gave this city to the descendants of Heracles' (fr. 2.12-13).

[95] Contra Ober 1989, 260-6; also 253-9 for appeals to descent in the Attic orators.

[96] So also Rose 2013, 75; contra Ober 1989, 289-92, 332-3. One may, however, still 'structural change' in the classical liturgy in *other* respects, insofar as the element of compulsion became stronger and the 'honours' granted by the community more formal; on the liturgical class, see esp. Davies 1971; 1984; on the development of public finance, see Van Wees 2013b.

[97] Donlan 1980, 33-4, 37-9, listed factors such as population growth, more intensive agriculture and increasing trade without spelling out how these forces combined to produce stratification; Qviller 1981; 1995 argued that pressure on chiefs to display generosity increased extraction of wealth from the lowest-ranking followers and redistributed wealth to 'lesser chiefs' who eventually formed an aristocracy; Rose 2013, 68-76, has added a military dimension: the development of wars of conquest rather than plunder created a need for a larger military elite which constituted a 'new oligarchy, which now may more justifiably be designated by the self-serving term "aristocracy"' (73).

[98] Population growth: Snodgrass 1980, 19-25; broadening of elite: Morris 1987 (Greece); Bradley, this volume (Italy). Similarly, Shepherd, this volume, analyses the development of elaborate burial practices in Greek cities in Sicily in terms of a threat to existing elites from new claimants .

[99] This was in fact Max Weber's approach; the usual perception that Weber favoured status over class as an analytical concept (e.g. Rose 2013, 3-6) is not borne out by his discussion in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, where he defines both class and status ('with some over-simplification, one might thus say that classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their *consumption* of goods as represented by special styles of life'; 1922, 937), and argues that an informal status group may become a formal 'order' when the distribution of economic power (= class position) remains stable (933), and that status groups will actively deny the significance of 'purely economic acquisition' (= class position), with greater 'sharpness' the more their actual economic position is precarious (936). Despite our criticisms of Ober1989, this book rightly does give equal weight to status and class.

[100] On this point, Finley followed Weber, who credited status ideology with the power to cause 'the hindrance of the free development of the market' in antiquity (1922, 937): we suggest that this is another instance of imposing modern 'aristocratic' values on the ancient world.

[101] Rose 2013, 37-8, 91-2, argues for a relation of 'indirect' exploitation insofar as the elite acquired most and best land and thus limits the opportunities of the lower classes, but says little about how these conditions resulted in a class struggle (as opposed to individual competition for land).

[102] For a similar formulation, see Finley 1973, 49; cited and criticised by Rose 2013, 6-7. Rose himself, like De Ste Croix, prefers to concentrate on relations of exploitation rather than defining groups, but if class is to be meaningfully used it must surely be possible to identify specific groups as classes.

[103] See Finley 1973, 45-51, tacitly adopting Weber's concepts of *Stand* ('status group'), *soziale Ehre* ('social honour', status) and their possible development into juridical 'orders' (1922, 932-6).

[104] Veblen's use of the term to mean 'upper classes … by custom exempt or excluded from industrial occupations' (1899, 21), where 'industrial occupation' is equated with 'productive labour' (e.g. 23), is problematic since it led him to label everyone employed in non-productive services, from domestic servants to priests and professors, as 'vicarious leisure classes' (esp. 55-6, 235-51). But we may redefine the term to mean 'a class of people who derive most or all of their income from the labour of others (as opposed to self-employment or employment by others) and are thus in principle able to live in leisure, whether or not they do exempt or exclude themselves from work.'

[105] Davies 1984, 28-9, remains the only serious discussion of what 'leisure class' means in economic terms (a minimum property of 1 talent in classical Greece); followed by e.g. Ober 1989, 128-31; van Wees 2001, 51. Davies argued that the 'liturgical' elite within this class consisted of only 400 men and therefore estimated the size of the classical Athenian leisure class at 1,200, or 4% of the free population; since it seems clear that the liturgical elite actually consisted of at least 1,200 men and the *eisphora*-paying class may have been rather larger still (Rhodes 1982), the leisure class must have been significantly larger. Van Wees 2013a, 229-32, argues that it formed about 15% of the Athenian citizen population.

[106] See Hodkinson 2000, and for the culture of 'austerity' also Van Wees, forthcoming. For Finley, the Solonian property classes were a 'classic example' of a non-hereditary 'order' (1973, 48 n. 28).

[107] For this interpretation, see Van Wees 1999 and 2006.

[108] See again Wecowski 2014 on the *symposion* and Fisher 1998 on the gymnasium.

[109] See, after Bourriot 1976 and Roussel 1976, e.g. Davies 1996, Duplouy 2010, Fisher this volume on Aegina, and, on criteria for 'citizenship' in archaic Greece, essays in Brock and Duplouy forthcoming.

[110] On attitudes to these at Athens, Davidson 1997, 270-77, Fisher 2008.

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