

ON THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK OF THE ‘ANONYMUS IAMBlichI’ (DIELS–KRANZ 89)*

ABSTRACT

The political outlook of the so-called ‘Anonymus IamblichI’ (DK 89) has been a subject of controversy in the scholarly literature, with some commentators judging him to be a committed democrat, while others see in him a partisan of aristocracy or even oligarchy. This disagreement is not surprising, for the text contains passages that seem to pull in opposite directions. The article suggests that we move beyond the one-dimensional oligarch-or-democrat model traditionally employed and instead approach the issue from a fresh angle, applying the more nuanced typology for understanding ancient social criticism (‘rejectionist’ vs ‘immanent’) developed by Josiah Ober.

The article begins by situating the author within the social landscape of classical Athens. The resulting characterization presents the author as a representative of a distinctive social type: the Athenian ‘rich quietist’, who prefers private economic endeavours to engagement in public affairs, and who is ideologically committed to democratic government but also highly critical of how democratic society treats its wealthy citizens. This characterization helps make better sense of the seemingly contradictory political indications in the text. In particular, fragments 6 and 7 should be read as a single line of argument, which takes the form of an ‘immanent critique’ of contemporary Athenian democracy. According to ‘Anonymus IamblichI’, democratic society rightly praises the rule of law as a distinctive democratic value, but it falls disappointingly short of that ideal in its treatment of its own wealthy elite citizens.

Keywords: ‘Anonymus IamblichI’; Athenian democracy; quietism; rule of law; immanent criticism; Isocrates; Xenophon; Plato

1. A NEW APPROACH TO THE ‘ANONYMUS IAMBlichI’

Few writers from antiquity have had such a wide array of political viewpoints and party affiliations ascribed to them as the anonymous Greek author traditionally referred to as the ‘Anonymus IamblichI’ (89 DK)—literally ‘Iamblichus’ unnamed author’, because his work has been preserved for us in the form of seven extended but unmarked citations by the late third- and early fourth-century C.E. philosopher Iamblichus in his *Protreptikos*.¹ While most scholars agree, on the basis of both linguistic analysis and considerations of content, that these excerpts likely derive from an otherwise

* This article was made possible by a COFUND Junior Research Fellowship at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, Durham University (2018–2019). I am grateful to Phil Horky, Leo Catana, Anthony Hooper and *CQ*’s reviewer for helpful suggestions and comments.

¹ The first to identify and isolate the text of an anonymous Greek author in ch. 20 of Iamblichus’ work was F. Blass, ‘De Antiphonte sophista IamblichI auctore’, *Kieler Festprogramm* (Kiel, 1889). The general reliability of Iamblichus as a transmitter of earlier authors has been established by D.S. Hutchinson and M.R. Johnson, ‘Authenticating Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*’, *OSAPh* 29 (2005),

unpreserved treatise by an Athenian (or at least Attic-writing) author from the Greek Classical period,² scholarly opinion on the specific question of the author's political outlook has been all over the map. Pointing to and emphasizing different elements in the text, scholars have found in the author everything from a staunch supporter of the Athenian democracy³ to a conservative 'moderate',⁴ a representative of the traditional aristocracy,⁵ or even an anti-democratic partisan of the oligarchic faction.⁶

The main claim of the present article is that we can make progress with the question of the political viewpoint of the 'Anonymus Iamblichus' by approaching it from a fresh angle. As the above cases show, the traditional approach to the question of the political orientation of the author has taken the form of an attempt to place him somewhere on a linear political spectrum ranging from 'full-blown oligarch' to 'die-hard supporter of democracy'. The problem with this one-dimensional approach is not just that the labels commonly used in order to specify the author's exact position on the spectrum ('democrat', 'moderate', 'conservative', 'oligarch') are seldom clearly defined and therefore not particularly informative. More importantly, the approach also risks becoming somewhat arbitrary when applied to a text such as that of the 'Anonymus Iamblichus', which contains elements that seem to pull in opposite political directions. Where precisely the pin comes down on the political spectrum will to a large extent depend on which aspects of the text we choose to privilege at the expense of others. So it seems worthwhile to search for an alternative and potentially more enlightening framework for analysis and categorization, which can better account for the text's politically mixed signals. A promising candidate here is the typology for political criticism proposed by Josiah Ober in his *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*. Drawing on the work by Michael Walzer, Ober suggests that we distinguish between two types of 'critics'. The rejectionist critic views society and its dominant values as fundamentally and irremediably flawed. Consequently, her criticism takes the form of

193–294. On the background for Iamblichus' inclusion of the fragments in his *Protreptikos*, see J.P. Dumont, 'Jamblique lecteur des sophistes. Problème du *Protreptique*', in *Le Néoplatonisme, Actes du Colloque de Royaumont, 9–13 juin 1969* (Paris, 1971), 203–14 and P.S. Horky, 'Anonymus Iamblichus, *On excellence* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς): a lost defense of democracy', in D. Wolfsdorf (ed.), *Early Greek Ethics* (Oxford, 2021), 262–92. References to the 'Anonymus Iamblichus' in this article follow H. Pistelli, *Iamblichus Protrepticus ad fidem codicis Florentini* (Leipzig, 1888).

² Linguistic analysis: Blass (n. 1), 2–3; K. Töpfer, 'Die sogenannten Fragmente des Sophistens Antiphon bei Iamblichos. Eine kritisch-exegetische Studie', *Arnauer Gymnasium-Programm* (Arnau, 1902); A. Ciriaci, *L'Anonimo di Giamblico. Saggio critico e analisi dei frammenti* (Naples, 2013), 59–74. Most scholars place the author in the late fifth or early fourth century B.C.E., but D. Musti and M. Mari, *Anonimo di Giamblico. La pace e il benessere. Idee sull'economia, la società, la morale* (Milan, 2003) have argued for a mid fourth-century date.

³ K. Bitterauf, 'Die Brückstücke des Anonymus Iamblichus', *Philologus* 68 (1909), 500–22, at 501–6 ('der Verfasser [steht sich] ohne Vorbehalt auf den Boden der bestehenden athenischen Demokratie'); W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge, 1971), 73 (a 'democratic sympathizer'); Ciriaci (n. 2), 55 ('un sostenitore della democrazia ateniese'); Horky (n. 1) ('a lost defense of democracy'). Cf. also A.T. Cole, 'The Anonymus Iamblichus and his place in Greek political theory', *HSPH* 65 (1961), 127–63, at 138–9 and 143.

⁴ S. Schneider, 'Ein sozialpolitischer Traktat und sein Verfasser', *WS* 26 (1904), 14–32, at 19 (an advocate of the Athenian 'Mittelstand' and 'einer gemässigten, agraren Demokratie'); K.F. Hoffmann, *Das Recht im Denken der Sophistik* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1997), 332 ('Konservativ'); Musti and Mari (n. 2), especially 256–64, 303 ('osservanza moderata', 'conservatore').

⁵ M. Lombardi, 'Etica, politica ed economia nell'Anonimo di Giamblico (VS 89, 7, 1–9)', *RhM* 157 (2011), 129–51, at 144 ('un intellettuale di estrazione aristocratica').

⁶ U. von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen* (Berlin, 1893), 174 n. 77; id., *Platon. Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Berlin, 1920), 58 n. 1. Wilamowitz tentatively identifies the author as Critias.

an attempt to radically overthrow those basic values and replace them with an entirely new and better set of values. The immanent critic, by contrast, is 'a reformer, rather than a revolutionary. This sort of critic regards the society under examination as capable of amelioration within the framework of the existing regime. She will therefore work within a set of norms and values already prevalent (if temporarily dormant) within her own political culture. The force of her criticism is not destructive; rather, she calls the citizens to be true to their own highest and finest cultural ideals.'⁷

As Ober rightly points out, most of the well-known Athenian authors critical of democracy do not belong squarely in one category or the other. Even Plato can occasionally adopt the attitude of the immanent critic, and Aristophanes has his rejectionist moments. The rejectionist/immanent distinction is therefore more useful to the scholar of Greek political thought as 'a heuristic device for clarifying different authorial stances within a corpus (or even within a given text) than as a typology for categorizing individual authors'.⁸ But, as we shall see, there is at least one instance of a Greek political theorist, not discussed by Ober, who can reasonably be said to belong unqualifiedly in one of the two categories. My suggestion in this article is that the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' can be helpfully understood as a clear example of an immanent critic of Athenian democracy. To understand why, it is necessary to attempt a social characterization of the author. In Section 2, I suggest on the basis of fr. 7 that the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' writes from the point of view of a distinctive social type within the context of democratic Athens: the Athenian rich ἀπράγμων or 'quietist'. Once this characterization is established, we can make better sense of his complex stance towards democracy. As a type, the rich quietist was highly critical of certain aspects of democratic life in Athens, but not necessarily of democracy as such. As I will argue in Section 3, the author's discussion of law and lawfulness in fr. 6 and fr. 7 should be construed as one continuous argument aimed at showing how Athenian democracy fails to live up to its own ideals and principles in one specific but important respect: it professes a strong commitment to the rule of law, but systematically disregards the legal rights of its wealthy citizens to their private property. The 'Anonymus Iamblichi' emerges as a thinker well deserving of the attention of classicists and historians alike: a sophisticated and nuanced theorist of democracy, whose ideas and arguments offer a rare glimpse into the world-view of a distinctive substratum of the Athenian elite that is not otherwise well represented in our literary sources.

2. A SOCIAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE 'ANONYMUS IAMBLICHI'

The seventh fragment cited by Iamblichus provides a natural starting point for an assessment of the social outlook of the anonymous author. In the first and longest part of that fragment (101.17–103.19), the author describes, by means of an extended series of antitheses, the various advantages and disadvantages that accrue from the contrasting states of *eunomia* ('respect for the laws') and *anomia* ('lawlessness') respectively.⁹ The

⁷ J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens. Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule* (Princeton, 1998), 48.

⁸ Ober (n. 7), 49.

⁹ For the meaning of *eunomia* as 'respect for the laws', see Arist. *Pol.* 1294a3–7; Xen. *Oec.* 9.14; [Pl.] *Def.* 413e. I return to the question of the distinctive connotations of *eunomia* as a political slogan below.

governing idea throughout the passage is that *eunomia* is beneficial because it is conducive to mutual 'trust' (πίστις) and 'social intercourse' (ἐμπιξία) within a society, something which among other benefits creates an atmosphere of respect and solidarity between different social groups (101.23–9):

When there is respect for the laws, people are able to navigate in the most beneficial manner what fortune presents them with, whether good or bad, concerning their property and life. For those who are fortunate enjoy their fortune¹⁰ in safety [ἀσφαλεῖ] and without it being plotted against [ἀνεπιβουλεύει], whereas the less fortunate are supported by the fortunate, as a result of the social intercourse and trust that come from respect for the laws.¹¹

By contrast, as the author explains at the later parallel passage (103.4–7), in a society where *anomia* reigns,

The bad and good fortunes of men pull in opposite directions. For when there is no respect for the laws, good fortune is not safe but plotted against [οὐκ ἀσφαλὲς ἐστὶν ... ἀλλ' ἐπιβουλεύεται], whereas misfortune cannot be repelled and wins out, owing to the lack of trust and social intercourse.

The beneficial results of *eunomia* are here described by the author as a sort of social 'trickle down' effect. When the ownership rights of the 'fortunate' (that is, wealthy) citizens are respected and their property is not the object of plotting and intrigue, those citizens in turn become inclined to come to the aid of their 'less fortunate' fellow citizens.¹² The author does not here specify the precise nature of the mutual 'support' among citizens that results from a state of *eunomia*, but the two passages must be understood against the background of an earlier argument put forward by the author in fr. 3.¹³ The second half of that fragment (97.25–98.12) contains an emphatic rejection of the suggestion that one could become 'beneficial to as many people as possible' (πλείστοις ὠφέλιμος) by simply 'giving out money' to one's fellow-citizens (χρήματα διδοὺς εὐεργετήσῃ τοὺς πλησίον). Such generous behaviour would be counterproductive, the author insists, because it would force the benefactor either to ruin himself or to engage in unjust behaviour in the attempt to make up for his generosity. It therefore seems unlikely that the 'support' praised by the author in fr. 7 would take the form of charity donations or some other form of direct redistribution of wealth. Rather, as many scholars have suggested, the author's account in these two passages is best understood as reflecting a distinctively economic understanding of the source of social prosperity.¹⁴ The idea is hinted at in another set of parallel passages from fr. 7 immediately preceding the passages cited above, which explain the effects of *eunomia* on the general attitude to the use and function of money in society (101.19–22, 103.1–3). In the climate of trust and social harmony that is generated by *eunomia*, the wealthy citizens do not 'hoard their money away' (τὰ ... χρήματα ... ἀποθησαυρίζουσιν), but rather allow that money to become available

¹⁰ I follow DK (cf. Hoffmann [n. 4], 311 n. 58) in supplying τύχη to ἀντὶ here, rather than εὐνομία as suggested by E. Des Places, *Iamblique. Protreptique* (Paris, 1989), 128.

¹¹ All translations from the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' are my own.

¹² For this use of εὐτυχής in the sense of 'wealthy' or 'prosperous', see K.J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1994), 174.

¹³ Cf. Musti and Mari (n. 2), 285; Ciriaci (n. 2), 184.

¹⁴ Hoffmann (n. 4), 311; Musti and Mari (n. 2), 285; Ciriaci (n. 2), 184; M. Faraguna, 'Pistis and apistia. Aspects of the development of social and economic relations in classical Greece', *MediterrAnt* 15 (2012), 355–74, at 362–3.

for common use (κοινὰ ... τὰ χρήματα γίγνεται) and to 'circulate' throughout society (κυκλοούμενα), presumably in the form of business investments, loans, etc., which in turn helps the lower classes by providing them with opportunities for employment and financial credit.¹⁵

This interpretation of the account of the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' concerning the social benefits of *eunomia* is strongly supported by a comparison with a strikingly similar passage from Isocrates' *Areopagiticus*, which also serves helpfully to bring out the concrete social background that is left implicit by the author.¹⁶ As part of his critique of current Athenian society, Isocrates explains how, in the time of the 'ancestral' *politeia* of Solon and Cleisthenes, Athens was characterized by harmony and mutual goodwill between the different social classes. The lower classes did not envy the wealthy (φθονεῖν, 32) or conspire against their wealth (ἐπιβουλεύειν, 24), and the wealthy in turn, far from looking down on their social inferiors, 'regarded poverty among their fellow-citizens as their own disgrace and came to the aid of the distresses of the poor, handing over land to some at modest rentals, sending some out to engage in commerce, and furnishing means to others to enter upon various occupations' (32). As Isocrates emphasizes, this beneficial social and economic dynamic was premised on a widespread respect for the laws, in particular those laws concerned with ownership rights and property. In financial disputes, rather than being misled by self-serving motives or indulging their own personal sense of equity, the popular law courts could be trusted strictly to 'obey the laws' (τοῖς νόμοις πειθομένους) and to punish severely 'those who cause the breakdown of the trustworthiness of contracts' (τοὺς ἄπιστα τὰ συμβόλαια ποιοῦντας). This climate of trust and lawfulness meant that the rich, rather than being forced to hide away their wealth (ἀπεκρύπτετο τὴν οὐσίαν), were confident about lending it out, thereby benefitting their fellow-citizens as well as promoting their own economic interests (35). As Isocrates sums it up, in ancestral Athens 'the ownership of property was secured [ἀσφαλεῖς] to those to whom it rightly belonged, while the enjoyment of property was shared [κοιναί] by all the citizens who needed it' (35).

Viewed against the background of the *Areopagiticus*, the passages on the social effects of *eunomia* in fr. 7 thus point to a broadly conservative social outlook on the part of the 'Anonymus Iamblichi'. His ideal society is one that is characterized by the harmonious relationship between distinct social classes, a healthy environment for economic activity, and respect for private ownership—particularly that of the wealthy—as the pillar of a well-functioning society. But this general characterization of the author can be elaborated and made more specific by turning to a particular element of his account of *eunomia* in fr. 7. The presence or absence of *eunomia* within a society, the author explains, also has profound consequences for how people can spend their time (102.1–7):

Owing to respect for the laws, people do not have to devote their time to πράγματα but can spend it on ἔργα of daily living. When the laws are respected, people are freed from the most unpleasant preoccupations, and can instead enjoy the most pleasant ones. For to be preoccupied with πράγματα is most unpleasant, whereas concern with ἔργα is most pleasant.

¹⁵ The distinctively economic approach to social well-being is among the most original and intriguing aspects of the 'Anonymus Iamblichi'; see M. Faraguna, 'All' origine dell' oikonomia: dall' Anonimo di Giamblico ad Aristotele', *RAL* 9 (1994), 551–89; Faraguna (n. 14); and Musti's introductory essay in D. Musti and M. Mari, *Anonimo di Giamblico. La pace e il benessere. Idee sull'economia, la società, la morale* (Milan, 2003).

¹⁶ Cf. Faraguna (n. 15), 583; Faraguna (n. 14), 363–5; Musti and Mari (n. 2), 254–305.

By contrast, when a state of *anomia* prevails, ‘men have no time for ἔργα, but concern themselves with what is unpleasant, that is, πράγματα rather than ἔργα’ (102.26–103.1). As scholars have often pointed out, the two central terms in these passages, ἔργα and πράγματα, which in their individual neutral sense can be used more or less as synonyms, take on a more determinate meaning when they appear in direct opposition to each other.¹⁷ Thus ἔργα come to refer specifically to private and productive activities aiming at the preservation and well-being of the *oikos*, as the author twice confirms by qualifying ἔργα as τῆς ζωῆς, that is, concerned with the daily business of managing livelihood and property (102.2–3, 102.14). By contrast, πράγματα take on the meaning of distinctively ‘public’ or ‘political’ activities, that is, those that are carried out within the general social and institutional context of the *polis* rather than of the *oikos*.¹⁸

In the general context of fr. 7, the author’s marked preference for ‘pleasant’ ἔργα over ‘unpleasant’ πράγματα points to an identification of the anonymous author as representing a distinctive social type within the context of the democratic Athens. This is the so-called rich ἀπράγμων (‘quietist’), whose characteristic outlook and concerns can be reconstructed from portrayals of the type in the Athenian orators as well as in fourth-century intellectuals such as Plato, Isocrates and, especially, Xenophon.¹⁹ Unlike those upper-class Athenians who actively sought a position of power and public acclaim in democratic politics, the rich quietist simply wants to be left alone to ‘mind his own business’ (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν).²⁰ To be sure, he is not indifferent to public opinion and concerns of reputation, but the reputation he is interested in is that of a respected and well-liked ‘pillar of society’, a successful and reliable private citizen devoted to the well-being of his friends and community. Preferring to devote his time and energy on productive and economic activities that contribute to the wealth of his private household, he perceives politics and public life as, at best, a waste of valuable time and, at worst, a constantly looming threat to his economically privileged position. The obligatory liturgies levied on rich Athenians he views less as an opportunity for public recognition than as an expensive and troublesome burden, imposed by an ungrateful *dēmos* on its social and economic superiors;²¹ and he lives in perpetual fear of becoming involved in πράγματα, in the sense of litigation or simply ‘legal troubles’, being plotted against and unjustly dragged into the popular courts by a ‘sycophantic’ prosecutor out to extract money from him.²²

¹⁷ Faraguna (n. 15), 584–5; Musti and Mari (n. 2), 287–8.

¹⁸ E.g. Thuc. 2.40.

¹⁹ For general discussions of the type, see L.B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford, 1986), 99–130; P. Demont, *La cité grecque archaïque et classique et l’idéal de tranquillité* (Paris, 1990), 105–6; Faraguna (n. 15), 565–7; R. Osborne, ‘Vexatious litigation in classical Athens: sykophancy and the sykophant’, in id., *Athens and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge, 2010), 205–28, at 220–1. That the ‘Anonymous Iamblich’ writes from the point of view of the Athenian rich quietist has also been suggested by Faraguna (n. 15), 584–7. My contribution adds considerations in favour of the *apragmosunē* interpretation and shows how it can help us make better sense of the author’s complex relation to Athenian democracy.

²⁰ Xen. *Mem.* 2.9 (Crito); Lys. 19.18. Cf. Plato’s appropriation of the slogan for his own purposes in *Resp.* 433a–b.

²¹ Xen. *Oec.* 2.5–7 (Critobulus), 7.3 (Ischomachus); *Symp.* 4.30 (Charmides). The fact that rich quietists often emphasize their zealous pursuit of liturgical obligations in law-court speeches does not contradict this point, since such statements are clearly part of a rhetorical strategy aimed at winning the sympathy of the citizen-judges. Cf. Demont (n. 19), 97–9.

²² Xen. *Mem.* 2.9 (Crito); *Symp.* 4.30 (Charmides); Pl. *Crit.* 44e1–6 (Crito); Isoc. *Antid.* 8. While sycophantic litigation was generally presented by the victims themselves as nothing more than a form of blackmail, it may well (also) have served a more political function by forcing the wealthy elite to

In general, dominating the self-perception of the rich quietist in Athens is a strong sense of being permanently 'under siege' from the democratic masses who envy and mistrust their wealthy fellow-citizens and are bent on exploiting them financially.²³ Rather than receiving the respect and dignity he believes his position in society entitles him to, he portrays himself as trapped in a highly precarious situation in which his private property is not 'secure' (ἀσφαλές) and needs to be closely guarded, or even hidden away, if it is to remain in the hands of its legally rightful owner.²⁴

The distinctive concerns and world-view of the Athenian rich quietist, as sketched above, also surface in several of the other preserved fragments of the 'Anonymus Iamblichus'. This is perhaps most clear in the case of the second fragment, which is concerned precisely with the problem of how an outstanding citizen can come to enjoy the respect and esteem of his fellow-citizens that he deserves, given that people are generally susceptible to envy and mistrust towards their superiors (96.5–23). While the question in this fragment is ostensibly raised as an abstract question about *aretē* in general, the author's later preoccupation with property and social cohesion is already hinted at in the last sentence, where wealth is conspicuously included among those good qualities that 'people do not easily accept' (97.6–8). Other passages likewise fit the profile. A deep-seated suspicion of politics on the part of the author is clear, not only from his explicit rejection of competitive *philotimia* in fr. 4 (99.8–15) but also, indirectly, from his strikingly ambivalent attitude to rhetorical skill, which is treated alternately as one of those worthwhile qualities that a person might reasonably aspire to attain (95.14, 97.17) and as a superficial and somewhat dubious technique that contrasts negatively with *aretē* itself (96.26–9).²⁵ Similarly, the rich quietist's characteristic resentment of the claims of the political community to his private property can be discerned in the argument from fr. 3 already referred to above, where the author emphatically rejects the suggestion that true excellence requires financial generosity on the part of the wealthy citizen, portraying the idea as misguided and ultimately self-defeating because the wealthy citizen would either ruin himself or be corrupted by the attempt to make up for his expenses (97.27–98.5).²⁶ The excellent citizen, the author insists, is rather someone who is 'beneficial to as many people as possible' simply in virtue of his firm commitment to, and support of, law and justice (97.26–7, 98.5–10).

I conclude this section by returning again to the seventh fragment. My suggestion that the fragments of the 'Anonymus Iamblichus' reflects this particular outlook on the

submit to the authority of the democratic community: Osborne (n. 19). On πράγματα in the specific sense of 'legal trouble': Demont (n. 19), 91; Faraguna (n. 14), 584–5.

²³ Xen. *Symp.* 4.29–33 (Charmides; cf. ὑπὸ τῆς πατρίδος ... ἀπιστεῖσθαι, 29); 4.45 (Callias); *Oec.* 2.5–7 (Critobolus); *Ar. Eq.* 264–5. Cf. Carter (n. 19), 111.

²⁴ Isoc. *Antid.* 159, *Areop.* 35; Xen. *Symp.* 3.9.

²⁵ Compare Xenophon's portrayal of Ischomachus, who admits the value of rhetoric as a means of self-defence in the law courts but also distances himself from its more questionable practitioners with the remark that, while he is reasonably good at pleading his case when it is expedient to speak the truth, 'when I need to tell a lie, by Zeus, I cannot convert the worse cause into the better' (*Oec.* 11.25). On this passage, see also below.

²⁶ The specific target of the author's criticism is often taken to be the kind of largesse-as-political-strategy associated especially with the Athenian statesman Cimon (Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 27.3; Plut. *Cim.* 10, *Per.* 9; cf. Faraguna [n. 15], 582; Musti and Mari [n. 2], 191). However, the argument could also be read as a more general criticism of any understanding of public service that implies direct financial commitments on the part of the individual private citizen, whether in the form of expected donations or in the performance of expensive liturgies.

relation between (elite) individual and democratic society is supported by the author's use, in that fragment, of two specific tropes from the elite *apragmosunē* discourse in Athens.

(1) The rich quietist is often portrayed as complaining that the precarious situation in which he finds himself is a threat, not only to his social and economic status but also to his peace of mind.²⁷ Xenophon's Charmides ironically remarks how his psychological well-being has significantly improved after he became poor: whereas as a wealthy man he led a miserable life dominated by constant fear of being taken to court by a sycophant and losing his property, now that he is no longer wealthy, 'I stretch out and enjoy a sound sleep' (ἡδέως μὲν καθεύδω ἐκτεταμένος, *Symp.* 4.31); and Aristophanes, in the parabasis to *Wasps*, lists among the comic targets of his previous plays the sycophantic prosecutors, who 'lying in the beds of the quietists among you [κατακλινόμενοι τ' ἐπὶ ταῖς κοίταις ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ἀπράγμοσιν ὕμῶν], piled up against them lawsuits, summonses and witnesses to such an extent, that many of them flew in terror to the Polemarch for refuge' (1039–42).²⁸ The 'Anonymus Iamblichi' similarly emphasizes the peace of mind and, in particular, the pleasant sleep that citizens enjoy when they are not plagued by πράγματα but allowed to preoccupy themselves with ἔργα (102.8–16):

When they [*sc.* those living in a state of *eunomia*] go to sleep, which is people's respite from trouble, they do so without fear and painful thoughts, and they are in the same condition when they wake up ...²⁹ [Rather than living in fear], they pleasantly turn their attention towards the ἔργα of daily living, which brings no pain, alleviating their toil with reliable and well-founded expectations concerning the good to come in reward. (Cf. the parallel passage on *anomia*: 103.14–18.)

(2) Sympathetic portrayals of rich quietists, particularly in Xenophon, describe how the threat of sycophantic lawsuits often forces the reluctant ἀπράγμων to learn to defend himself and 'fight the devil with fire'. Ischomachus is said to have begun to teach himself a bit of rhetoric in order to make himself more effective in the law courts, and thus less vulnerable to malicious prosecution (Xen. *Oec.* 11.21–3); and in one of Xenophon's Socratic anecdotes, Crito, complaining that he is being exploited by malicious prosecutors, is advised by Socrates to become the friend and benefactor of the poor but rhetorically gifted Archdemus, who will in turn defend him by going on the legal offensive against the sycophants (*Mem.* 2.9.1–8). The same basic dynamic can be observed in fr. 7 of the 'Anonymus Iamblichi', where the author (if in less vivid terms than Xenophon) explains how a state of *anomia*, where the private property of the 'fortunate' is not secure but plotted against, will eventually lead to 'counter-plotting' (ἀντεπιβουλεύοντας), presumably on the part of the wealthy themselves (103.10–13).

3. THE 'ANONYMUS IAMBLICHI' AND ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

Commenting on a passage from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, where Critobulus complains about the expensive liturgies imposed on him by the Athenian people (Xen. *Oec.* 2.6),

²⁷ Cf. M.R. Christ, *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2006), 175–6.

²⁸ Cf. Demont (n. 19), 105.

²⁹ The Greek text in the excised lines is problematic and probably corrupt: Musti and Mari (n. 2), 306–9.

Sarah Pomeroy remarks that ‘[t]he tone of this passage is oligarchic, stressing the unfairness of burdens, and asserting that the demos, in effect, regarded the wealth of the rich as “their property”’.³⁰ As we have seen, this remark accurately captures the rich quietist’s attitude towards the liturgical system and what he takes to be the Athenian people’s lack of respect for (his) private property. But Pomeroy’s inference concerning the specific political connotations of Critobulus’ complaint (‘oligarchic’) is too hasty. As Matthew Christ rightly points out in a discussion of similar passages, ‘while these various petulant assertions are coloured by antipathy for democratic institutions, a wealthy man did not have to be a closet oligarch to see inequality in the city’s arrangements involving financial obligations; it was hard to miss the fact that the rich paid a great deal while others paid nothing, especially if one was rich’.³¹ An interesting passage from Plato’s *Republic* Book 8 bears this point out. In the course of his account of democracy’s collapse into tyranny, Socrates proposes to divide the democratic city into three groups of citizens: the opportunist ‘drones’ who dominate politics and public life, the rich citizens preoccupied with money-making, and the *dēmos* itself in the specific sense of the lower classes. Invoking a familiar trope from contemporary *patrios politeia* discourse, Socrates portrays the *dēmos* as naturally agricultural and uninterested in politics, explaining how they first become agitated by populist demagogue-drones who turn the lower classes against their wealthy fellow-citizens.³² Under these conditions, the rich in effect become the ‘feeding ground’ for the drones (Pl. *Resp.* 564e13–14), who on their part distribute some of the confiscated wealth to the lower classes while keeping most of it for themselves (565a7–8). What is particularly interesting for our purposes is Socrates’ account of the political attitude of the wealthy citizens who suffer under this exploitative regime (Pl. *Resp.* 565b2–c4; transl. Griffith, modified):

SOCRATES: Those whose property is taken away are presumably compelled [ἀναγκάζονται] to defend themselves by speaking in the assembly and by taking whatever other action they can.

ADEIMANTUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Even if they have no desire at all for revolution [κἂν μὴ ἐπιθυμῶσι νεωτερίζειν], they are accused by the others of plotting against the people and being oligarchs.

ADEIMANTUS: Naturally.

SOCRATES: In the end, when they see the people attempting to wrong them [ἀδικεῖν]—not maliciously but out of ignorance, misled by their slanderers—at that point, whether they like it or not [εἴτε βούλονται εἴτε μὴ], the rich really do become oligarchs, though not from choice [οὐχ ἐκόντες]. This too is an evil implanted in them by the sting of the drone we were talking about.

Since this passage is part of Plato’s larger account of how democracy descends into tyranny, it is not surprising that it ends with the total polarization of democratic political life into opposing factions, democrats and oligarchs, which in turn sets the stage for the tyrant to arise. But his starting point is an analysis of democratic society as it is (cf. ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ἔχει, 564d1), and as part of that analysis he clearly recognizes the presence of a distinctive group of rich elite citizens who are committed to, or at the very least accept, the basic premise of popular rule, but who are also highly dissatisfied with how they are being treated under the current regime. As Plato

³⁰ S.B. Pomeroy, *Xenophon. Oeconomicus. A Social and Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1994), 229.

³¹ Christ (n. 27), 186.

³² Cf. Isoc. *Areop.* 24; Arist. *Pol.* 1318b6–17.

emphasizes, these elite citizens are not oligarchic sympathizers or supporters of regime change (cf. κᾶν μὴ ἐπιθυμῶσι νωτερίζειν, 565b6–7) and their eventual defection to the oligarchic faction is presented as happening very reluctantly (cf. εἴτε βούλονται εἴτε μὴ ... οὐχ ἐκόντες, 565c1–3). But while they are thus in principle committed to democratic principles, they are presented as democratic citizens who clearly do not feel comfortable with the particular form of popular rule under which they live, which they perceive as unjustly exploiting them financially, mistrusting them politically, and forcing them to engage in the kind of public business they find highly disagreeable.

The proposed characterization of the ‘Anonymus Iamblich’ as writing from the point of view of this particular type within Athenian society, that is, the rich quietist committed to democracy in principle but critical of specific aspects of its current manifestation, provides the basis for coming to a better and more precise understanding of the political orientation of his argument as a whole. What I suggest is that the anonymous author represents a remarkably clear example of Ober’s ‘immanent critic’, whose mode of social criticism is precisely not to radically reject the fundamental values and principles of her society but rather to subject her society to criticism in the name of those very values and principles. This strategy of ‘immanent criticism’ emerges clearly if we read the eulogy of *eunomia* in fr. 7 as part of a larger argument beginning already in fr. 6. The sixth fragment is presented as an argument in defence of *nomos*, ‘law’, polemically aimed at those who claim that excellence consists in having the power to pursue *pleonexia* (‘getting more than one’s fair share’), and that obedience to the laws is really only cowardice. Against the proponents of this subversive thesis, which recalls that of Callicles in Plato’s *Gorgias*,³³ the ‘Anonymus Iamblich’ argues that the rule of *nomos* over men is in fact both natural and beneficial (100.9–18). Human beings are by nature (ἔφυσαν) unable to live on their own and are by necessity brought together, forming communities and developing the technical means for survival. However, since they would not be able to live together in this way without laws (ἀνομίᾳ), it is necessary that ‘law and justice reign as a king among human beings’ (100.16–17). As the author goes on to argue, not even a hypothetical ‘man of steel’, invulnerable and immune from suffering, would be better off pursuing a life of *pleonexia* in disregard of the laws. On the contrary, he too would need to obey and support the laws in order to survive (100.9–101.6):

For all men [τοὺς ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους] would decide to make themselves enemies of the man who had this nature, because of their respect for the laws [διὰ τὴν ἐαυτῶν εὐνομίαν]; and the multitude [τὸ πλῆθος], either by skill or by strength, would surpass and prevail over such a man. In this way, it is evident that power itself, in so far as it is power, is preserved by law and justice.

As many commentators have noted, the anonymous author’s argument against the hypothetical ‘man of steel’ scenario seems less than compelling.³⁴ But what is more interesting for our purposes are the strikingly democratic ideas and principles that underpin the argument. According to the author, it is because ‘all men’ would band together in defence of their shared ideal of respect for the laws that the ‘man of steel’ would be unable to successfully pursue a life of *pleonexia*. The ultimate guarantor of lawfulness is the *dēmos* itself, understood as a strong and competent collective agent

³³ Cf. Musti and Mari (n. 2), 231–3; Ciriaci (n. 2), 154–5; Horky (n. 1), 283.

³⁴ Wasn’t the ‘man of steel’ supposed, *ex hypothesi*, to be invincible? E.g. R.K. Balot, *Greed and Injustice in Classical Athens* (Princeton, 2001), 204–5.

in possession of the force and ability required to overcome the unlawful challenger.³⁵ The author is here tapping into central strands of democratic ideology as it can be reconstructed from Athenian law-court oratory and drama. Commitment to the rule of law was generally presented and perceived, at least in Athens, as a distinctively democratic ideal.³⁶ In Euripides' *Suppliant Women* Theseus contrasts the lawlessness of one-man rule, on the one hand, and lawful popular government like that of Athens, on the other (Eur. *Supp.* 429–37; cf. 403–8); and Aeschines expects his audience to share his view that 'tyrannies and oligarchies are administered according to the temper of their rulers, but democracies according to the established laws' (1.4).³⁷ Moreover, in a famous passage from his speech against Meidias, Demosthenes forcefully invokes the Athenians themselves as the ultimate defenders and upholders of the laws. Having explained to the popular jurors that their authority stems not from physical strength but from the strength of the laws (Dem. 21.223), he turns around and asks (Dem. 21.224):

But what is the strength of the laws? For if one of you is wronged and cries out, will the laws come running up and offer aid? No; they are just inscribed letters, and they have no power to act independently. So what provides their power? You—but only if you support them and keep them masterful in support of he who is in need. Thus the laws are authoritative through you, and you through the laws. (Cf. 21.140–2.)

Now, it might perhaps seem that the conspicuous emphasis of the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' on such democratic ideals in fr. 6 stands in some tension with his preferred terminology. The anonymous author uses the term *eunomia* to describe the distinctive respect for the laws, which makes the people naturally hostile to the pleonexic 'man of steel' (διὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν εὐνομίαν, 101.2). This choice of political terminology, which is also conspicuous throughout fr. 7, has been taken by some scholars to suggest aristocratic leanings on the part of the author.³⁸ After all, we frequently find *eunomia* associated by Greek authors with distinctively aristocratic cities, in particular Lycurgan Sparta, but also Epizephyrian Locris, Crete and Corinth;³⁹ and the oligarchic and Sparta-friendly author of the Xenophontic *Constitution of the Athenians* explicitly contrasts the democratic regime of fifth-century B.C.E. Athens with a city that enjoys *eunomia* (Xen. [*Ath. pol.*] 1.8.). But while these texts are clearly relevant for mapping the connotations of *eunomia* in Greek political discourse, the assumption that the appearance of the term in and of itself indicates a preference for aristocratic government is too crude and should be abandoned in favour of a more nuanced approach. Our sources indicate that the ideal of *eunomia* was a flexible political slogan that could also be appealed to in explicitly democratic contexts, where the use of an acknowledged aristocratic watchword would not have gone down well with the audience. When Demosthenes praises the *eunomia* of the Locrians in his speech against Timocrates,

³⁵ The same idea reoccurs, in an even more explicitly political context, at the end of fr. 7 in the author's discussion of the emergence of tyranny (103.20–104.14). The lawless rule of a tyrant only becomes possible at the moment 'when these two things, law and justice, leave the people' (ὅταν οὖν ταῦτα τὰ δύο ἐκ τοῦ πλήθους ἐκλίπη, ὃ τε νόμος καὶ ἡ δίκη, 104.2–3; cf. 104.5–6).

³⁶ Cf. J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, 1989), 299; M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1991), 74.

³⁷ Cf. also Dem. 24.75–6.

³⁸ Musti and Mari (n. 2), 257–9.

³⁹ For references, see G. Grossmann, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges* (New York, 1973²), 33–8; Musti and Mari (n. 2), 257 (with n. 81).

he does so in order to encourage his audience of Athenian citizen-judges to display a similar respect for the laws (Dem. 24.139–40); and Aeschines pursues the same agenda, in the passage already referred to above, when he declares that ‘you are strong when you display *eunomia* and are not overthrown by those who break the laws’ (εὐνομήσθε καὶ μὴ καταλύσθε ὑπὸ τῶν παρανομούντων, 1.5).⁴⁰ This compatibility of the *eunomia* slogan with democratic discourse and culture can also be observed in the Athenian art of the Classical period. The personification of *eunomia* seems to have been a popular motive in Athenian vase-painting, which suggests that the term was not in itself perceived to carry specifically aristocratic or anti-democratic connotations.⁴¹

However, while it is therefore not very helpful to approach the *eunomia* slogan as indicative of a specific constitutional preference, this does not mean that the term was wholly devoid of political connotations. A useful comparison can be made with the slogan of ‘law and order’ in modern political discourse. In itself, the use of this slogan does not normally reveal anything about the speaker’s constitutional preferences. After all, the ideal of ‘law and order’ can be appealed to both by a right-wing military junta attempting to justify deposing a democratically elected government and by a parliamentary conservative party, wholly committed to democratic politics, in arguing for a stricter law-enforcement policy. However, what we very rarely find is that the ‘law and order’ slogan is explicitly appealed to by parties of a distinctively left-wing or progressive political outlook. While compatible with different constitutional preferences, the ‘law and order’ slogan is clearly understood to be appealing to more conservative values. This, I think, is how we should also approach the term *eunomia* in the ‘Anonymus Iamblichi’. Given the author’s direct appeal to distinctive democratic ideals in fr. 6, we should not interpret his choice of terminology as suggestive of an aristocratic outlook, let alone a preference for Lyncurgan Sparta. But his choice of terminology does show what specific sort of democratic values he takes to be most important. What he is interested in are not the democratic values of, say, freedom or equality.⁴² Rather, what he is concerned to do in the argument against the hypothetical ‘man of steel’ in fr. 6 is to highlight and applaud a specific democratic ideal that seems much more congenial to a conservative outlook: the people’s respect for, and defence of, the laws.

This sets the stage for the second step in the author’s immanent criticism of democratic Athens, which follows immediately in fr. 7. As we have seen, the lawlessness (*anomia*) that the author is concerned to denounce in that fragment is first and foremost the lack of respect for the ownership rights of ‘the fortunate’, that is, the wealthy. According to him, the lower classes’ disregard for these rights is what fatally poisons the relations between rich and poor in the city, leading to pernicious effects for both the socio-economic and the psychological environments. On my interpretation offered above, the author’s concern with this particular form of lawlessness reflects his distinctive social point of view as a rich quietist in democratic

⁴⁰ Cf. also [Dem.] 25.11, 35. Even if E. Harris is right that this speech is a later Hellenistic forgery (*Demosthenes. Speeches 23–26* [Austin, 2018], 193–7), it was clearly meant to sound like something that could plausibly have been delivered in fourth-century B.C.E. democratic Athens, which makes it relevant as a source for understanding the political connotations of *eunomia* in that period.

⁴¹ Cf. A.C. Smith, *Polis and Representation in Classical Athenian Art* (Leiden, 2011), 72–6.

⁴² On the importance of these ideals in Athenian democratic ideology: Hansen (n. 36), 73–85. In the final section of fr. 7, the author does mention the regrettable loss of freedom (ἐλευθερία) under tyrannical rule (103.24). But there the discussion is specifically about the political freedom of the community, not about the liberties of individual citizens.

Athens. But it is also important to note that the author himself insists on a close connection between this particular concern and the discussion in the preceding fragment. Not only does he take up again the terminology of *eunomia* introduced in fr. 6 and puts it at the centre of his vision of the ideal society. But he also, even more strikingly, portrays the state of *anomia* as one that is characterized, specifically, by *pleonexia* (ἐξ ἀνομίας τε καὶ πλεονεξίας, 103.28). The abstract problem raised in the sixth fragment is thereby translated into much more concrete social terms. What we are being told is that the unjust desire for 'more than one's fair share' is not an exclusive feature of some hypothetical 'man of steel'. It is also characteristic of the attitude of the lower classes ('the less fortunate') towards the property of their social superiors in a society where the laws are not being respected.

On this basis, we can construe fr. 6 and fr. 7 as parts of a single argument aimed at the author's contemporary society. While the argument against the pleonexic 'man of steel' in fr. 6 serves to bring to the fore the high standard for lawfulness that Athenian democracy claims for itself, the seventh fragment goes on to point out how it falls lamentably short of that standard in an important respect. A democratic society like Athens, where the laws that supposedly protect private ownership are systematically trampled underfoot in favour of unjust *pleonexia* on the part of the lower classes, is a democratic society that fundamentally fails to live up to its own ideal of respect for the laws. Not unlike Plato in *Republic* Book 8 the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' gloomily predicts that this failure will eventually lead to *stasis*, war and the rise of a tyrant (102.18–21, 103.8–10, 103.20–104, 106; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 564b–66d). But the underlying message is that it need not come to this. After all, as we have seen, fr. 7 also contains a portrayal of what a society characterized by a genuine commitment to respect for the laws would look like. The democracy of the Athenians can be saved from itself, but only if it moderates itself and rediscovers its *eunomia*, in particular its respect for the basic legal rights of its wealthy citizens to their private property as well as to their personal peace of mind.

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

ANDERS DAHL SØRENSEN
andersdahlsorensen@hotmail.com
adahl@hum.ku.dk