INTRODUCTION

1. THE DEBATE OVER THE DEFINITION OF POVERTY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Absolute versus Relative Approach

Scholars of classical Athens have paid little attention to what Athenian society understood as poverty, the attitudes it promoted towards the destitute and the sensitivity it expressed toward destitution and poverty. These aspects have not been ignored, but they have traditionally appeared on the margins of studies of attitudes toward work[1] and leisure[2] and philosophical thought on the ideal state and society.[3] In the introduction to his volume *Poverty in the Roman World* (2006), Osborne argues that a public discourse of poverty never emerged in classical Athens, just as it failed to do so in Republican Rome, while a public discourse of wealth existed both in Athens and in Rome.[4] Yet, frequent recourse to representations of poverty in Athenian drama and arguments based on poverty in public and private oratory in the fourth century testifies to ongoing debate, public sensitivity, and collective imaginary of poverty and destitution. Last but not least, it reveals clear awareness of the rhetorical and persuasive power that arguments based on poverty had before the Athenian audience. The aim of this book is to explore the public debate on poverty, of which our sources give us several glimpses, and to investigate how arguments about poverty and representations of it were used in the context of public communication from the eve of the Peloponnesian War to the rise of Macedonia in the mid-fourth century.

It is evident that a work that seeks to reconstruct the main lines of this debate cannot overlook the question of what poverty was in classical Athens. Osborne points precisely to the need to adopt a twofold approach to the study of poverty in the ancient world, namely by combining research on quantitative data with consideration of ancient perceptions and discourses of poverty: he rightly stresses the importance of distinguishing between "poverty as image" and "poverty as reality" and of analysing and linking both.[5] Thus far, historians investigating poverty in classical Athenian society have focused mainly on the reality of poverty. They have

1 Glotz (1926); Vernant (1965); Mossé (1966); Bodei Giglioni (1974) Descat (1986); Engels (1989).

2 Balme (1984); Carter (1986).

3 The literature on Greek utopian thought is vast; I limit myself to citing Braunert (1969); Ferguson (1975); Bertelli (1976); Dawson (1992); Garnsey (2007); Bichler-Rollinger (2007) and (2008).

4 Osborne (2006) 15.

5 Osborne (2006) 4. On p. 3 he notes: "those who, like Bolkestein, Hands and Brown, interest themselves in attitudes to the poor tend to look only superficially at what it was actually to be

primarily pursued quantitative questions, such as subsistence-level income, the threshold for contributing to liturgies and taxation (hence, membership in the category of the wealthy), the distribution of wealth and land among citizens and the feasibility of basing quantitative arguments on literary and archaeological evidence.[6] Investigating these questions is important, but faces severe limitations. In regard to standards of living, remains of the private houses and workshops of craftsmen (often in the same buildings) have been found on the Athenian Agora,[7] but these tell us very little about the life of ordinary Athenians (presuming that the people living in these building were Athenians). Funerary practices are equally ambiguous, with respect both to demographic trends – as Morris has shown[8] – and wealth distribution, because the ordinary citizens were buried in common graves (so-called secondary burials, an example of which is the *Dêmosion Sêma* in Athens), and funerary stelae were usually erected by people of modest and conspicuous wealth.

Estimations of land distribution based on archaeological and literary evidence suggest that circa ten percent of Athenian citizens owned two thirds of the land in the fourth century.[9] But that does not entail that landless Athenians were poor. Citizens worked in crafts and trades alongside metics and slaves, but we cannot say how many did so, nor can we form a clear picture of the distribution of wealth derived from trade and craftsmanship among citizens. We also must be wary of estimates of how much a landless worker had to earn on a daily basis to make a living, because we lack comprehensive information on the cost of living for the entire classical period.[10] Models projecting the number of poor persons among the Athenian citizen body have been attempted predominantly for specific time-frames during the classical period, above all the last three decades of the fourth century.[11]

The exploration of these aspects is indeed essential to our understanding of Athenian society. Leaving aside the methodological difficulties posed by the evidence, however, one must also acknowledge that quantitative parameters can answer only one side of the question. Knowing how many Athenians fell below the

poor, while those who, like Prell and Patlagean, interest themselves in the actual conditions of the poor pay little attention to ideas about the poor."

6 Davies (1971) and (1981); Osborne (1992); Foxhall (1992) and (2002); Kron (2011) and most recently, but limited to the age of Lycurgus, Van Wees (2011).

7 For workshops and private houses located in the same buildings, see Bettalli (1985) 29–42. On the urban spaces of the poor in Greek cities, see Ault (2005) 140–159; Werlings (2014) 67–81; Rougier-Blanc (2014) 105–135. For recent discussion of the question of the "visibility of the lower classes" in the archaeological record, see Pollini-Esposito (2013) 117–134.

8 On the problematic relationship between burial patterns, demographics and social structure, see Morris (1987) and (1992).

9 Osborne (1992) 24: 7.5% owned ca. 30%; Foxhall (1992) 157–158: 9% owned 35% and controlled a further 10% by leasing; Van Wees (2011) 95–114: 4–7% (the wealthy) owned 27–43%, and 25% (the poor) owned 1–2%. Kron (2011) 135: 1–10% owned 31–60%. See chapter 3 "Political stability and the distribution of wealth" with n. 109, 110, 111, 112, 113.

10 See the objections of Akrigg (2007) *contra* Loomis (1998).

11 The most recent such study is Van Wees (2011) 95–114 for Athens during the last three decades of the fourth century. Cf. Kron (2011) 129–138.

level of subsistence tells us nothing about the categories of people described as poor in public discourse. The question indeed assumes an entirely different dimension if we acknowledge that what the sources describe as poverty is not merely a question of quantity, that is, not just a status linked to income level, buying power, eating habits and life expectancy. The concept of poverty is much more complex and deeply embedded in value systems and social relations.

A complex perspective on poverty has emerged from scholarly debate in the social sciences. Scholars of anthropology, sociology and, specifically, development studies have long discussed the problem of defining poverty. The vast debate that the question has generated – and continues to generate – has, among other results, led to a constant re-evaluation of the criteria on which assessments of poverty should be based. Many of the theoretical aspects that anthropologists highlight for modern societies can give ancient historians valuable guidance in determining the direction their own research on poverty in the ancient world should take. A brief overview of the anthropological debate will serve as a good starting point for discussing the methodology employed in this book.

Interest in the study of poverty was first aroused in the context of social riots in England towards the end of the nineteenth century. Booth conducted a thorough study of the socio-economic composition of the lower strata of the East End of London (*The Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1902), attempting to determine the percentage of poor people among them. He categorised the inhabitants into eight classes using an empirical method based on interviews and the inspection of workplaces and private houses. He then produced maps in which poverty was documented quantitatively street by street. His survey was premised on the assumption that poverty could be defined by quantitative parameters such as income, food consumption and household expenditure. The same assumption was made in another work that brought greater attention to the problem and became the focus of debate for decades to come, namely, Rowntree's first study of the population of York (*Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, 1901). Rowntree notably distinguished between what he called "primary poverty" and "secondary poverty." Primary poverty is the condition of those whose earnings are not sufficient to obtain basic necessities, while secondary poverty is the state of those who can meet basic needs, but cannot afford any further expenditure.[12] The importance of this study, beyond its fundamental distinction between two types of poverty, is the fact that Rowntree established well-defined criteria for determining the threshold of primary poverty.

Booth's and Rowntree's studies laid the theoretical foundation for the liberal reforms that helped to establish the English welfare state. Besides providing empirical tools for the definition of poverty, their works proved to be a turning point for the perception of poverty in society at large. They showed on an empirical and practical basis that poverty was not a condition caused by individual fault – a firmly

12 Rowntree revised his criteria in his second survey of poverty in York, beginning in 1935, mainly in the light of the fact that the establishment of the welfare state in England had considerably improved the conditions of the poor and had raised the poverty threshold to reflect higher standards. Rowntree did not, however, change his method of calculating poverty. See Rowntree (1941).

rooted belief among the middle and upper classes of Europe, particularly in Protestant countries – but that it was rather a consequence of low income and other obstacles to reaching an adequate standard of living. Sickness and unemployment insurance and state pensions were introduced in the years 1906–12. In the following three decades, both scholars and politicians agreed that poverty had significantly been reduced, and no substantial progress in the study of poverty was made.

New interest in the question arose in the 1950s in Britain and the United States. Among the sociologists, Townsend was one of the first to reconsider Rowntree's criteria, concluding that they were largely arbitrary, especially Rowntree's distinctions between necessary and non-necessary goods,[13] and that a new method was needed. He drew attention to the fact that the spending habits of the poor are affected by the conventions of membership in their community and argued that these conventions must be taken into consideration in the study of poverty.[14] A few years later, in 1962, he returned to the question with a more innovative perspective. Observing that post-war policies to reduce poverty – combined with the economic boom of the 1960s – had led to the erroneous belief that poverty had been eliminated, he argued that this mistaken belief rested on false methodological assumptions about the quantitative aspects of poverty. He argued that "both 'poverty' and 'subsistence' are relative concepts and (…) they can only be defined in relation to the material and emotional resources available at a particular time to the members either of a particular society or different societies."[15] In his view, establishing a scale of nutritional needs and assessing the extent to which individual households match it cannot *per se* indicate poverty. For the first time, the important point was made that "poverty is a dynamic, not a static concept"[16] and that its variations depend not only on quantitative parameters but also on the predominant system of relations, values, and behavioural patterns of a given society. Townsend therefore came to formulate his concept of "relative deprivation," which profoundly influenced studies of poverty in the following decades.[17] In Townsend's view, the concept of poverty constantly changes according to the obligations that society imposes. Part of one's individual needs arise in response to these obligations. Townsend's conclusion was that "individuals and families whose resources, over time, fall seriously short of the resources commanded by the average individual or family in the community in which they live (…) are in poverty."[18] Thus, he defined

13 Townsend (1954) 131 f.

14 Townsend (1954) 133. In his view, it would have been more correct to collect overall data on food consumption and expenditure, grouped according to household size and income, and then to compare them to a scale of nutritional needs. This view differs from the previous one in that it derives quantitative criteria from an average derived from a large number of working-class households and therefore reduces the risk of abstract conceptualisation. Nonetheless, the quantitative criterion was still regarded as the chief standard for defining and analysing poverty.

15 Townsend (1962) 219.

16 Ibid.

17 Relative deprivation was not invented by Townsend. The term was originally introduced in 1949 in the first volume of *The American soldier*, a study of the American army during World War II conducted by Stouffer et al.; see Runciman (1966) 10 with n.1.

18 Townsend (1962) 225.

poverty as a relative condition, namely a state of deviation (toward a lower standard) from the average standard at which individuals of a given society live.[19] A poor person, in other words, is someone who lacks goods that society considers fundamental and necessary. It is clear that we have here an assessment of poverty that varies both according to the degree of general prosperity and according to the type of culture of a given society.

Townsend, however, did not push his view into total relativism, and he did not advocate the complete rejection of quantitative parameters. He rather developed an assessment model that took into account a wide range of factors and their complex interaction.[20] His theory had the merit of highlighting the multifaceted character of poverty as a concept and, in practical terms, of pushing its study far beyond the mere quantification of poverty. Thereafter, two antagonising models became subjects of discussion in the 1960s: the absolute and the relative model. Both models presented difficulties: the main fault of the absolute standard – as criticised by Townsend – was the impossibility of finding clear-cut criteria for defining poverty. In contrast, the relative model described poverty as "deviation from social and economic norms,"[21] with the effect that it included economic statuses well above the subsistence line. As a matter of fact, in a wealthy society people lacking none of the basic necessities, but who simply fall below a remarkably high average level of welfare, might well be perceived and referred to as poor.

As is apparent, the idea of the relative nature of poverty intimately associates it with social concepts, in particular those of social class and status groups. In 1966 Runciman made an important contribution to this debate with *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, in which he stressed that the concept of relative deprivation simultaneously implies the existence of a "reference group," a fact that had only implicitly been suggested in Townsend's argument that the perception of poverty depends on parameters sanctioned by society. It is clear that individuals who meet these parameters must act as a point of reference. Thus Runciman argued that the concept of relative deprivation involves "a comparison with the imagined situation of some other person or group." This other person or group acts as a "comparative reference group."[22] This refinement of the relative deprivation approach proved to be fundamental, although Runciman did not explore in detail how the nature of a

19 With regard to primary needs listed as necessities, Townsend recalled Adam Smith's definition: "By necessaries I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without." The quotation, from Townsend (1962) 219, is taken from Smith (1991 [1776]).

20 Thus Townsend notes that the nutritional intake necessary to maintain physical efficiency varies according to age, gender, climate and geographical region. He argues that psychological well-being should also be considered a feature that distinguishes upper- and middle-class individuals from the poor. Furthermore, living standards should be compared to those a society had experienced in the past in order to detect possible fluctuations (Townsend 1962, 218–227; 1979, 31–60).

21 Mencher (1967) 7.

22 Runciman (1966) 11 derived the concept of the "reference group" from Hyman (1942). Runciman notes that a reference group can also be used in a normative rather than a compara-

group (cultural, economic or ethnic) affects its role as a "reference" for the individual.

By the late 1960s, the scientific community seemed to have fully acknowledged the superiority of the relative over the absolute approach. Townsend's 1970 collection of essays *The Concept of Poverty* furnished further, extremely thorough arguments for rejecting approaches to estimating poverty based on positivist criteria.[23]

New Approaches from the 1980s to the 2000s

Despite the success of the relative approach, however, the absolute – or, as it would later be called, the biological – approach had not been, nor would be, abandoned. In 1981 a turning point was made by the future Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen. In *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Sen helped to rehabilitate some aspects of the absolute approach. He argued that "relative deprivation is essentially incomplete as an approach to poverty, and supplements (but cannot supplant) the earlier approach of absolute dispossession. The much maligned biological approach, which deserves substantial reformulation but not rejection, relates to this irreducible core of absolute deprivation, keeping issues of starvation and hunger at the centre of the concept of poverty."[24] The fundamental flaw of the relative deprivation model, according to Sen, was confusion of the concept of inequality with that of poverty. He argued that, although closely related, the two concepts should be regarded as distinct.[25] Sen's approach, while partly rehabilitating the absolute standard, also introduced several innovations. Sen in fact

tive sense; namely, it can refer to the group from which the standards of comparison are derived and to which individuals drawing the comparison belong (1966, 11–13).

23 In his introduction to the volume, Townsend (1970) 2 highlights the necessity of studying the mode of social stratification and distribution of wealth in a given social context. Four years later, he explored this research proposal further in his introduction to the volume *Poverty, Inequality and Class Structure*, edited by Wedderburn (1974). The contributions to this volume focus on political and social exclusion with the aim of clarifying to what extent poverty and inequality overlap. The editor notes that the several contributions leave "unanswered the question whether poverty is a meaningful sociological concept as distinct from social inequality" (Wedderburn 1974, 10). Townsend's own answer is clear: "Inequality is not poverty. Even if we succeed in identifying and measuring inequalities in the distribution of resources those in the lowest quintile or decile, say, are not necessarily poor" (1974, 33).

24 Sen (1981) 22.

25 Sen argues that one should further distinguish between poverty as a concept and "the poor" as a category. With regard to the latter, he stresses the necessity of differentiating individual situations according to the causes and the economic and social dynamics that had brought about a state of poverty: "A small peasant and a landless labourer may both be poor, but their fortunes are not tied together. In understanding the proneness to starvation of either we have to view them not as members of the huge 'army of the poor', but as members of particular classes, belonging to particular occupation groups, having different ownership endowments, and being governed by rather different entitlement relations. Classifying the population into the rich and the poor may serve some purpose in some context, but it is far too indiscriminating to be helpful in analysing starvation, famines, or even poverty" (1981, 156).

recognised the weakness of interpretations based on monetary standards and the inadequacy of income. In particular he stressed the necessity of differentiating between income inequality and economic inequality, each of which tells us different things about poverty.[26] Low income does not necessarily entail poverty and, by contrast, a relatively high income in a wealthy society might still result in the exclusion of an individual from social life.[27] In several contributions, Sen developed a new model that focussed on the capability of individuals to achieve a fulfilling life. The so-called capability approach he developed is a significant improvement on the absolute approach, since it recognises a variety of factors beyond those that are monetary and related to consumption. However, Sen's model does not entirely escape the risk of subjectivity in assessing the basic capabilities necessary for a valued life and establishing its features.

The scope of poverty research broadened further under the influence of the new epistemological and methodological elements introduced by Bourdieu's studies of capital. Bourdieu's threefold distinction between economic, cultural and social capital – to which he later added a fourth category, namely, symbolic capital – ultimately supported the claim that neither poverty nor wealth can be described in purely economic terms.[28] A person who lacks financial means but relies on a good network of friends might not be perceived and described as poor, and, furthermore, might avoid many financial difficulties by utilising the social and human capital he possesses.

In the 1990s several attempts were made to draw up a list of universally valid basic capabilities so that a definition of poverty could be reached. Nussbaum (2000) proposed a list that included good life expectancy, good health, reproductive freedom, thought informed by education, emotional/social life, the possibility of planning, protection against discrimination, sharing life with other species, play and control of political choice and of property.[29] Some, however, doubted the universal and objective character of these requirements. Thus, Ruggeri Laderchi (2003) described Nussbaum's list as a late twentieth-century, western conception of the good life. In more general terms, she emphasised the difficulty of translating capabilities into something measurable.[30] The capability approach indeed focuses on outcomes (the characteristics of the life of non-poor) and not on the mechanisms that prevent or favour the realisation of such standards of living. In order to measure the factors that make these standards possible, one has to focus on quantitative data; hence, the capability approach becomes nearly indistinguishable from the absolute approach.[31]

A new perspective on the model of relative deprivation emerged from the scholarly debate of the 1990s and early 2000s. This model was based on the concept of social exclusion, which is the condition in which an individual cannot take part

26 Sen (2000 [1992]) 211–215.
27 Sen (2000 [1992]) 214.
28 On cultural and social capital (as distinct from economic capital), see Bourdieu (1986) 241–258; on symbolic capital, see Bourdieu (1994).
29 Nussbaum (2000).
30 Ruggeri Laderchi *et al.* (2003) 254–255.
31 Ruggeri Laderchi *et al.* (2003) 255–257.

in what are considered normal activities in the society in which he lives. It is apparent that such an approach privileges a social/relational perspective on poverty; it focuses primarily on groups subject to social marginalisation, and it explores the dynamics of this process.[32] This approach has been promoted and utilised particularly in the context of implementing antidiscrimination policies in the EU and by international cooperative programmes. However, it is open to the objection that social marginalisation is not always a consequence of the economic aspect of poverty, since individuals can also be marginalised for political, ethnic, religious and sexual reasons. In an article titled "Representing Poverty and Attacking Representations" (2006), Green observes that representations of poverty are closely connected to the political explanations given for its causes and to the proposed strategies to reduce it.[33] Representations have changed in the international development policies of the last twenty years, but they have not displaced the old models. Green notes that quantitative methodologies – above all those based on income – were still adopted in the report on development issued by the World Bank in 1990, while the 2001 report regarded poverty as the result of the complex interaction of factors such as high mortality, low level of education, poor health and social and political exclusion.[34]

One last approach stemmed from debate over the last twenty years: the so-called "participatory approach." This approach also adopts the perspective of relative deprivation, since it presupposes the participation of the poor themselves in the assessment of their condition and therefore entails comparison with a desired condition of which they feel deprived – or comparison with a group/class that is perceived as enjoying the desired condition. Needless to say, this model also suffers a high risk of subjectivity on account of social conditioning and a significant lack of information.[35]

2. ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY AND THE CONCEPT OF "ACTIVE POVERTY"

The Impact of the Sociological Debate on the Study of Poverty in the Ancient World

The debate on methodology and approaches to the study of poverty generated in the social sciences has not been overlooked by ancient historians.[36] In particular, the debate has contributed by raising awareness that poverty in the ancient world cannot be studied as a material state independent of prevailing systems of social rela-

32 Ruggeri Laderchi *et al*. (2003) 258–260.
33 Green (2006) 1–37.
34 For relevant quotations from the two World Bank Reports, see Green (2006) 10.
35 Ruggeri Laderchi *et al*. (2003) 262.
36 In particular, scholars of the Roman world have discussed the correct methodology for studying poverty in antiquity; see, for example, Prell (1997) 10–29; Morley (2006) 21–39; Scheidel (2006) 40–59.

tions, behaviours, legal norms and collective perceptions. Studies of wealth distribution are fundamental to our understanding of poverty in the ancient world, but it is largely clear today that determining a subsistence line in a given social and historical context tells us no more about poverty in that society than it does about the general shape of its economy. If we find how many individuals fell below the subsistence line in ancient Athens, that will indeed give us a good picture of its economy and social structure, but that picture may not correspond to the ideas Athenians held about poverty and the poor. Furthermore, since ideas about poverty played a role in public discourse, as I hope to show in this book, and were frequently used as arguments to influence political decisions, it is clear that the investigation of poverty must include a much wider range of factors than merely quantitative parameters.

Interestingly, awareness of the intrinsic difficulty of defining poverty sporadically emerges in the Greek literary record. Above all, it is the subjective nature of judging the quality of the living standards that is openly admitted: thus, Theognis of Megara notes that "if anyone asks you how I live, reply to him as follows: 'Poorly by good standards, but quite well by poor standards'" (Thgn. 520–522, trans. D. E. Gerber). Socrates, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (4.2.37–38), asks Euthydemus to define the *dêmos*, and, subsequently, the *penêtes*. To Euthydemus' response that the latter are those who possess just the bare necessities of life, Socrates objects that there are people who are satisfied with little and wealthy men who always strive for more. The heart of the problem is identifying the necessities of life. Socrates rejects the universally accepted definition of *penia* by showing its subjective and relative nature. It is thus clear that an investigation of the public discourse of poverty in classical Athens requires an analysis of what the Athenians labelled poverty and the imaginary they developed for the concepts of poverty and destitution. This will entail that we explore how the concept of poverty was applied to categories that were not poor in economic terms. The premise is to identify the characteristics of the reference group – that is, the upper-class minority that authored our literary sources – and the aspects this group considered proper to a decent and honourable life. Indeed, in the context of communicating with large audiences, such as those in the Assembly or theatre, the reference group had to find a "middle ground";[37] namely, it had to use images and concepts of poverty that were shared by a majority of Athenians. We will see concrete examples of this in the discussion of the evidence of drama in chapter 2.

Poverty in the Study of the Ancient Greek World

Prior to the ground-breaking work of Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (1973), ancient historians tended to consider economic history and the social phenomena connected to economic realities in isolation from one another. Despite the rigidity of Finley's primitivist approach, his work remains fundamental insofar as it adopted an anthropological perspective to the study of the ancient economy. In Finley's view, since

37 Ober (1989) 305–306.

the economy was embedded in a system of personal relations in ancient societies, in order to understand how it functioned historians must study the rules that governed social life in certain groups.[38] Finley's perspective was strongly influenced by Weber's notion of the status group, a category that differs from Marx's notion of social class insofar as it defines communal groups not merely according economic factors, but also in regard to their shared values, worldviews, life-styles and the social esteem accorded them by others.[39] Applying the concept of the status group to the study of the ancient society opened up a more complex perspective on social relations and led to a better understanding of how they functioned: individuals tend to follow the norms that their own status group or the leading status group in their society recognise as valid. Interestingly, this can also occur between individuals who belong to different economic and social strata: the same worldviews and values can be shared by individuals of different economic and social standing, who nonetheless strive to make their behaviours and beliefs conform to those promoted by the status group with which they identify.

Finley, however, neither devoted special attention to the poor nor identified poverty in the ancient world as a promising subject of study. Proper interest in attitudes toward and perceptions of poverty arose among ancient historians from the 1970s onwards, in part in response to the new research directions pioneered by the *nouvelle histoire* approach to the Middle Ages, developed by the third generation of historians of the *Annales* School.[40] The third generation had a stronger influence on classical studies than the first two: these scholars focused on the so-called *histoire des mentalités*, namely, the images of certain subjects that past societies developed. The exploration of representations – both in literary sources and in iconographies – was one of the preferred means with which scholars attempted to reconstruct ancient social and collective images.[41]

Patlagean makes a fundamental point specifically about images of poverty in antiquity in her work on poverty in Byzantium. She argues that historians dealing with literary sources must distinguish as a methodological premise between "material poverty" and "social poverty." The former concerns economic conditions; the

38 This approach contrasts dramatically with Rostovtzeff's modernist view that the ancient economy could be studied according to the rules that governed modern capitalistic society, the only difference being that the scale and level of production in the ancient world were much smaller. What interests us here is that, among other innovative ideas, Finley introduced the realisation that economic phenomena not only have an impact on social and political structure, but are themselves influenced by social customs and rules.

39 Weber (1946) 180–195. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the Marxist approach continued to dominate research on the social and economic history of the ancient world; Vernant notably dedicated a chapter of his book *Mythe and Société en Grèce ancienne* (1974) specifically to "la lutte des classes." Though less radical than Pöhlmann (1984 [1925]) from an ideological perspective, Oertel himself dedicated most of his work to the study of the *soziale Frage* and *Klassenkampf* (for a collection of his papers, see Oertel 1975); and in 1982 De Ste Croix' influential book *The Class Struggle in the Ancient World* was published.

40 For a discussion of this approach, see Patlagean's paper on the history of imaginaries in Le Goff (1990).

41 For criticism of this approach, see Burke (1997).

latter relates to socially recognised status. Material poverty can be objectively defined according to parameters such as property ownership, annual income, number of family members and cost of living, but what political discourse describes as poverty does not necessarily equate to low economic conditions. By contrast, she defined "social poverty" as the condition determined by the common imaginary and public ideology.[42]

In the 1970s and 1980s, studies on the economic and social status of marginal figures in the ancient world began to devote attention to the popular perception of such figures and collective attitudes manifested towards them. It is neither necessary nor possible to give an exhaustive list of the works produced on this subject here: I will limit myself to citing a handful of significant contributions. A vast project directed by Welskopf culminated in the publication of the seven volumes of the *Sozialtypen Begriffe*.[43] In addition to exploring the position and living standards of each *Sozialtyp*, this project also undertook a systematic terminological analysis of the social perception of different social categories. The Marxist approach based on the identification of classes in economic terms was complemented by interest in the analysis of the status and social recognition society accorded each of them.[44] In 1988, the proceedings of an international Symposion, held in Graz, on marginalised figures in the ancient world were published in a volume edited by Weiler, *Soziale Randgruppen und Außenseiter im Altertum* (1988). The volume includes a broad spectrum of studies of both the material conditions and social perception of subaltern groups, including the poor, the handicapped, women, foreigners and slaves.[45] Anglo-Saxon research also explored the universe of values associated with wealth and poverty: notably, Dover's *Greek popular morality* appeared in 1974. Although this work is not devoted specifically to the perception of wealth and poverty, a chapter dedicated to the question of "status" contains an interesting subchapter on the subject.[46]

Since the late 1990s, there has been growing interest specifically in poverty in the Greek East and in the Roman West. Megitt dedicates the first chapter of *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (1998) to the question of defining the poor in the early imperial age and contextualises the question of poverty in Paul's thought. Holman's *The Hungry are Dying* (2001) examines the practice of Christian charity and the discourse of poverty in Roman Cappadocia; Brown's *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (2002) studies how local élites constructed a political discourse of poverty and the poor to secure leadership and political power in the cities of the later Roman Empire. Finn's *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire* (2006) explores the meaning, modes and promotion of Christian almsgiving toward the

42 Patlagean (1977) 9–35.

43 Welskopf (1981–82).

44 See, for example, the contributions of Dreizehnter (1981) and Rössler (1981) to the third volume of Welskopf (1981–82).

45 For studies of the poor in the Greek world in the volume edited by Weiler, see Kloft (1988) 81–106; Ulf (1988) 73–80; Wickert-Micknat (1988) 59–72.

46 Dover (1974) 109–112. By contrast, Herman (2006) does not address moral behaviours and perception related to poverty.

end of the Imperial period. The reasons for this interest are evident, if we consider that, from the 1st century AD on, Christianity had an enormous impact on the perception of poverty and attitudes toward the poor. Nonetheless, the impact of Christianity has also somewhat limited scholarly interest in attitudes toward poverty in the pre-Christian period.

In part, this limited interested is due to the belief – still dominant among historians – that the pagan world never developed any particular interest in or ethical thought about the poor. One of the first works to disseminate this idea was Bolkestein's 1939 study of social assistance to the poor in the pre-Christian world: among Bolkestein's conclusions, the most fundamental was that neither Greek religion nor, more generally, Greek ethical, political and philosophical thought acknowledged the moral obligation of helping the poor and the needy. By contrast, this obligation was promoted in oriental religions, above all in Judaism and the Egyptian religion, before it later became one of the precepts of Christianity. Bolkestein makes a strong case for concluding that neither charity nor almsgiving featured in the Greek and Roman universe of values.[47] Nonetheless, he tends to downplay much of the evidence for these practices in archaic and classical Greek sources. Although his conclusions did not preclude further studies of almsgiving in ancient pre-Christian society, they still exerted a strong influence on the starting premises of subsequent work. Thus Hands' 1968 book *Charities and Social Aid in the Ancient World* explored the practice of giving to the poor in a social and cultural universe in which Hands explicitly acknowledged there was no prescription or moral obligation for solidarity. For a long time such views helped to relegate the study of attitudes toward poverty in antiquity almost exclusively to Late Antiquity and the Byzantine world.

Recently, however, new efforts have been made to explore assistance to the poor in the pagan world. In the context of the research project "Fremdheit und Armut: Wandel von Inklusions- und Exklusionsformen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart" (SFB 600) at the University of Trier, a volume on *Armut – Perspektiven in Kunst und Gesellschaft* was published in 2011. In addition to a catalogue of the 2011 exhibition on poverty held at the Stadtmuseum Simeonstift and at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Trier, the volume also contains several scholarly essays that attest to a renewed interest in assistance to the poor in the pagan world.[48]

While it is true that Christianity revolutionised the perception of poverty and relations with the poor, the idea that poverty itself was first addressed in the context of Christianity, and that only with the rise of Christianity did society develop an imaginary of poverty, is erroneous. The classical Greek world suffered most from this outlook, although some studies of the perception and discourse of poverty in the Greek world have appeared: Desmond's *The Greek Praise of Poverty* (2006) aimed at showing that the valorisation of poverty promoted by Cynicism was not entirely new in the late fourth century but was deeply rooted in earlier Greek phil-

47 Bolkestein (1939) 95–115.

48 See, for example, the contribution of Hermann Otto-Schäfer (2011). On giving to the poor in the pagan world, see also Cecchet (2014) 157–179.

osophical and ethical thought. Desmond is right; he focuses, however, almost exclusively on the pre-Socratics, Plato and Xenophon, which raises the question of the relationship of these sources to the broader Athenian public.[49] A recent collection of essays devoted specifically to poverty in the Greek world edited by Galbois and Rougier-Blanc, *La pauvreté en Grèce ancienne: formes, représentations, enjeux* (2014), publishes the proceedings of a conference held in Lyon in 2011 on poverty in the ancient Greece. In addition to papers focusing on the "identification" of the poor and their position in different socio-political contexts, this volume also offers useful material on the perception of poverty and ethical and philosophical reflections on the topic in the archaic and classical periods.[50]

Scholars have approached poverty specifically in classical Athens *en passant* primarily with quantitative methods aiming to assess the consequences of economic crisis (for example, after the Peloponnesian War)[51] or in studies of the social structure of classical Athens.[52] The other side of the question, namely, the conceptualisation and imaginary of poverty warrants much more research. I hope to show in this book that a public discourse of poverty did exist in classical Athens. The aim of the present work is to explore the underlying assumptions and characteristics of the common imaginary of poverty and their use in public communication. I will analyse how public speakers and actors utilised the repository of beliefs and assumptions about poverty and the poor before Athenian audiences gathered in the major venues of public life. Before turning to the aims, contents and overall methodology of this book, however, I will elucidate the concept of "active poverty" as it emerges from Athenian sources.

Active Poverty as Good Poverty

As noted above, several attempts have been made to quantify wealth at Athens, the most successful to date being Davies' *Wealth and the Power of Wealth in Classical Athens*. Davies defines membership in the liturgical class – that is, the proportion of Athenian citizens able to perform public liturgies – as a criterion for regarding a citizen as wealthy, and he assesses its lower threshold at about 3-talents worth of property in the fourth century.[53] We have no reliable evidence for the fifth century, so he generally applies the same criterion to the earlier period as for the fourth century, notwithstanding awareness that the Peloponnesian War must have caused significant economic changes. Applying this criterion, Davies argues that the terms *euporoi* and *plousioi* in classical Athenian sources designate – in their proper use

49 See Vlassopoulos (2006).

50 On the possibility of identifying the poor and their spaces in the Greek cities, see Werlings (2014) 67–81; Rougier-Blanc (2014) 105–135 (also n. 7 above); on the philosophical and ethical reflection on poverty, see Orfanos (2014) 213–222; Pébarthe (2014) 223–236.

51 See, for example, Strauss (1986) 42–63.

52 For example, on wealth distribution, see Davies (1971) and (1981); Kron (2011); on social structure and status in classical Athens, see now Kamen (2013).

53 Davies (1981) 30–31.

– members of the liturgical class. He estimates their number at around 5% of the overall citizen population. A further 10–15% of citizens were in all probability liable to pay the *eisphora* (for which an income of around 2,500 drachmae per year was needed).[54] This, however, gives us only a rough idea of the richest section of the upper strata of Athenian society. Below the threshold of the liturgical class, and below that of those liable to pay the *eisphora*, there was a highly diversified range of economic and social statuses – ranging from small farmers who owned a couple of slaves, to those who worked their own land alone (*autourgoi*), to the owners of workshops, and to landless wage-labourers (whether in an urban or rural environment). The sources subsume all these diverse positions and categories under the label *hoi penêtes*, which is usually translated in modern languages as "the poor," although a more appropriate translation would be "those who work."

It is obvious that not all people classified as *penêtes* were living at the level of subsistence, but we cannot say how many were at the bottom of the economic ladder. There is good reason, primarily having to do with the state of our evidence, why we have no generally accepted definition of the threshold for subsistence in classical Athens. Markle once attempted to calculate the average cost of living and the amount of money needed daily by a landless Athenian family in the fourth century. After discussing the evidence for the prices of wheat and barley in the classical period, he suggested that 4 obols per day were sufficient to sustain a family of four in the late fifth and for a good part of the fourth century.[55] According to his calculations, 2½ obols per day were the minimum amount needed to buy the necessities of life for four people.[56] Markle's arguments aimed to substantiate the idea that public pay for jurors (3 obols per day) was sufficient to give a living to landless citizens from the 420s down to 322, and thus that jury service still appealed to the poorest citizens in the fourth century, in contrast to the theory of Jones.[57] Markle's discussion, however, is vitiated by the unlikely assumption that the price of a *medimnos* of wheat remained stable throughout the classical period, with the exception of temporary fluctuations caused by war and famine.[58] I will discuss the evidence for salaries and payment for public services in the late fifth and fourth centuries in chapter 3 of this book, with reference to the work of Loomis;[59] for the moment, I will merely note that any estimate of the cost of living, and hence an assessment of the poverty threshold in the classical period, is severely hampered by the scarcity of

54 Davies (1971) xxiii–xxiv; (1981) 28; for arguments for a lower threshold for liability for the *eisphora*, see Gabrielsen (1994) 45–53.

55 Markle (1985) Appendix 293–297, particularly 295 for the argument for 4 obols per day.

56 Markle, ibid. Isocrates (7.54) refers to crowds of citizens who, in his own day, gathered for the annual selection of the 6,000 in the hope of thereby securing "the necessities of life." Jury pay in the fourth century was 3 obols per day.

57 Jones (1957) 35–37 and *passim* argued that the salary for jury service appealed to poor citizens in the fifth century, but the stability of the pay at 3 obols during the fourth century and the natural inflation of the cost of living would have made 3 obols barely enough for a living in the fourth century. Hence he argued that, in the fourth century, jurors were members of the middle class and not in need of state pay to sustain themselves.

58 Markle (1985) 293; the weakness of this assumption was first pointed out by Todd (1990) 157.

59 Loomis (1998).

sources. Historians can attempt a quantitative definition of poverty in classical Athens only by allowing a large margin of error. At best, we can assume that a landless worker earning 3 obols per day in the fourth century would have struggled to make a living and, in order to sustain his family, he would have needed all its members to work, including women and children.[60]

The sources describe people who fall below the threshold of bare subsistence as *ptôchoi*, although this term is often used hyperbolically and is also applied to people well above the subsistence line. The concept of *ptôcheia* in the literary record of classical Athens matches that encountered in the Homeric epics and archaic poetry: it indicates extreme poverty and, most importantly, utterly desperate poverty.[61] At the opposite end of the social ladder are the *euporoi* and *plousioi*, who can be identified in economic terms according to the aforementioned criteria proposed by Davies. As noted above, the social and economic condition between these two extremes is far less visible on the level of terminology. Occasionally, *metrioi* is used to indicate a socio-economic group: thus, for instance Demosthenes mentions the *metrioi* and *dêmotikoi* as two groups in conflict with the *euporoi* and *plousioi* (21.183: τῶν μετρίων τινὰ καὶ δημοτικῶν). In Euripides' *Suppliants* we find the periphrasis "the category in between" (*Supp*. 244: ἡ 'ν μέσωι) to indicate those who are neither wealthy nor destitute. In the vast majority of cases we encounter periphrases such as "those who possess little," which obviously leaves open any question of quantity. Archaic sources employ the terms the "good" and "bad" with clear moral connotations, and this morally charged terminology survives down to the classical period and beyond.[62]

It is clear that neither *penia* nor *ptôcheia* gives a clear-cut definition of economic status. Indeed, one might think that the use of *penia* and *ptôcheia* in the sources always refers to two degrees of poverty, differing on a quantitative scale. This is true, but we should not lay too much emphasis on it: the word *penêtes* is used very broadly in reference to "those who work"; hence we hear of *penêtes* who have a house, fields, slaves and even a small workshop.[63] Yet, in contrast, we also hear of *penêtes* who have lost everything in the war and had to work to restore their financial standing.[64] As is obvious, *penêtes* cannot be defined as a social class in economic terms. A more viable approach might be to regard them as a status group,

60 Indeed, the threshold of subsistence is likely to have varied considerably over the roughly 100 years from the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War until 322. At the time of the first Spartan invasion of Attica, we know from Thucydides (2.13) that most of the rural population left the countryside and moved into the city. This must have been a major blow to Athens' social and economic structure, and the subsequent Spartan occupation of Decelea rapidly led to major problems with the grain supply from Euboea (Thuc. 7.19.1 and 7.27–28). For discussion, see chapter 3 "The loss of the empire and the restructuring of the economy."

61 See the transformation of Odysseus into a *ptôchos* in *Od.*13.398 f.

62 For paradigmatic examples of moral terminology such as *kakos/agathos, deilos/lampros*, used to distinguish between upper and lower strata in archaic sources, see *Od.* 15.324; Hes., *Op.* 214–215, Thgn. 524–526. For a collection of evidence for the classical period, see Dover (1974) 109 f.

63 This is the case with Chremylus in the opening verses of Aristophanes' *Plutus*.

64 This is the case with Euetherus in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.8.1.

namely as the part of the Athenian population that shared common characteristics, values and lifestyle. But which characteristics and lifestyle?

When it came to constructing a political idea of poverty, the Athenians made distinctions not so much in terms of quantity as in terms of quality. They distinguished between a good type of poverty – a kind of "noble poverty" – which I will term "active poverty," and a bad type, which I will call "inactive/passive poverty." The former is the state of an honest citizen who manages to make his living by working and never resorts to parasitical behaviour or to criminality. This type corresponds to the model of the just citizen celebrated in the democratic discourse. The latter kind is the poverty of those who are unable – or unwilling – to find a solution to improve their condition and resort to the aid of others, whether fellow-citizens or the polis. This qualitative distinction is reflected in part in the distinction between *penia* and *ptôcheia*, since in this dichotomy the notion of quantity is associated with that of quality. A *penês* is generally regarded and depicted as an "active" poor person, the *ptôchos* as "inactive," idle and hence hopeless. In this distinction, it does not matter so much whether the activity performed by the *penês* is financially profitable (as in the case of merchants, traders or bankers) or merely provides subsistence (as in the case of small farmers). Far more important is the proactive attitude shown by the choice to make a living through work and not to resort to begging or criminality. Indeed, agricultural work was celebrated in public discourse as the ideal activity, while commerce and trades were regarded with contempt by the upper classes. Yet, both were practiced by individuals described in the sources as *penêtes*, individuals whose lifestyle was expected to differ from that of the leisured upper strata, and who, in their political ideology, strongly identified with the principle of democratic rule. The Athenians were indeed well aware of the fact that *ptôcheia* could also be caused by catastrophes – war being the most obvious case. But even in the event of war, it was the individual's responsibility to seek a way out of misfortune.[65]

The idea of "active poverty" is first formulated as a legitimate state for citizens in Pericles' funeral oration of 431 (Thuc. 2.37 f.), in which the main criterion for a good citizen is the willingness and capability to contribute to the administration of the state and not to be concerned only with one's private affairs. A citizen who does not partake in public life is useless. Musti interprets Pericles' idea as a concept of active citizenship ("concezione attivistica della cittadinanza"),[66] which illustrates very well why poverty is regarded as shameful only when it is a sign of inactivity. A good citizen is an active citizen; hence, to be poor is not bad *per se*, but not to do anything to escape poverty is. Pericles' words imply that inactive poverty, of which begging is an example, is unacceptable because it excludes a citizen from the political community, making him useless. The precondition for political participation is overcoming poverty to an acceptable level: *polypragmosynê* is a *modus vivendi* that entails not only participating in public life, but also overcoming the obstacles that prevent an individual from accessing public life. From this perspective, poverty

65 For perceptions of poverty specifically in Athens, see Rosivach (1991) 189–198.
66 Musti (1997) 103–104 and 114.

is not simply an obstacle, but also, at the same time, a stimulus. In Herodotus' *Histories* we find a clear appreciation of poverty as a condition that compels men to engage actively in work and avoid the risks that the desire for riches and power entail. A few examples will suffice here. In the famous dialogue between Solon and Croesus in Hdt. 1.30, the king of Lydia asks the Athenian sage to name the happiest and most fortunate man on earth. Solon points to the Athenian Tellus, whom he describes as a poor citizen who lived a peaceful life and was buried by his sons in his motherland. Croesus, who aspired to be the richest man on earth, remembers Solon's words only when it seems his last hour has come and he is standing on a burning pyre lit by Cyrus. In Book 7 of the *Histories*, the Spartan Demaratus, addressing the Persian king Xerxes, portrays the Hellenes as constantly struggling against poverty and political despotism, because τῇ Ἑλλάδι πενίη μὲν αἰεί κοτε σύντροφός ἐστι (Hdt. 7.102.1). In Greece, he says, poverty is endemic; hence its inhabitants must pursue virtue through wisdom and law.[67] It is clear that *penia* is depicted here as a stimulus to virtue, a view that, as Desmond has shown, was firmly rooted in classical Athenian society.[68] Demaratus' remark is not negative; on the contrary, the scene plays on the contrast between the riches of the Persian court and the poverty of the land that eventually will valorously drive the Persians back. The same motif returns in Hdt. 9.82 after the victory of Plataea: entering the Persian camp, Pausanias orders a feast to be prepared: he draws a strong contrast between the splendour of the Persian banquet and the austerity of the Spartan diet.

The main question of this book, however, is not how poverty was regarded in terms of individual existence, but rather how it was treated in public discourse. In the view of Thucydides' Pericles, τὸ πένεσθαι should not be an obstacle to public life, provided that one has the will to improve one's condition. It is probably this belief that justified the introduction of *misthoi* (public wages) for public services, an act that many regard as the real commencement of Athenian democracy, in a more significant way than Solon's cancellation of debts or Cleisthenes' tribal reform.[69] Millett regards the institution of public pay as a way to centralise the redistribution of income and as a fundamental step toward reducing the dependence of the poor on rich patrons. He considers the case of Cimon, who donated food and clothing to the poor on a regular basis in order to enhance his popularity (Theopomp. FGH 115 F 89, 135; cf. Plut. *Cim*. 10.1–2; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol*. 27.3), as one of the last remnants of an earlier phase, in which political prestige was maintained by securing patronage relationships.[70] According to [Aristotle] (*Ath. Pol.* 27.4), Pericles' established *misthoi* in order to win his political rivalry with Cimon. Whether this interpretation is correct or not, the *misthoi* inaugurated radical change, since, from the second half

67 Thomas (2002) 198–111 interprets the reference to *peniê* and *aretê* as parallel to the pair *physis/nomos*.

68 Desmond (2006).

69 Thus, Raaflaub (2007) 105–154 regards the reforms of Ephialtes and Pericles as decisive steps toward the birth of democracy, while Ober (1996) 32–52 points mainly to Cleisthenes, and Wallace (1997) 11–29 to Solon. See also "Conclusions", n. 6.

70 Millett (1989) 24 f. On the same question, see also Zelnick-Abramovitz (2000) 65–80; Pébarthe (2007) 173–197.

of the fifth century onward, social aid towards citizens in need was provided largely by the state (and to a lesser extent by forms of mutual assistance, such as loans of the *eranos* type).[71] In [Aristotle]'s words, Pericles gave to the multitude "what was their own" (ibid.: διδόναι τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰ αὑτῶν).

Pericles' perspective on poverty – or at least the view Thucydides attributes to him – was not universally accepted in Athens. Democracy never swept away the idea that *penia*, though indicating an active form of poverty, could nonetheless impose serious limitations on political action and good leadership. As we shall see, the sources suggest that this view found support not only among the detractors of democracy, but also among the supporters of a form of moderate democracy, who believed the best citizens were neither rich nor poor and held up the hoplite-farmer as the ideal type. This moderate view did not reject the idea of active poverty, but favoured a particular kind, namely agrarian poverty as opposed to that of the urban mob. One of the traits praised in the ideal small farmer is his rare participation in the Assembly, an aspect that largely contradicts Pericles' idea of political engagement. The rural poor own medium/small-sized plots of land, work their land with no means of delegating to servants or hired workers and can acquire a hoplite armour. With reference to the methodological approaches discussed above, it is clear that the perception and representation of the *autourgos*/hoplite as "poor" presupposes a *reference group* that possesses large estates, delegates work to servants and hired workers and belongs to the highest military ranks. It is obvious that this celebration of small farmers as embodying a good kind of poverty, which was economically self-sufficient and politically rejected the meddlesome urban mob, was promoted by the upper echelons of Athenian society, who in fact shaped the public discourse of poverty.

The birth of this "myth of the middle class" army,[72] associated with a good kind of rural poverty, has ideological roots in the archaic period: a positive view of rural work and country life appears as early as the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, and the Athenian upper classes made no substantial modifications to the traditional view. Interestingly, the need to promote this good kind of rural poverty, and in particular the traits of moderation and the rejection of political meddlesomeness, was strengthened and radicalised in classical Athens by a new political trend in the latter half of the fifth century. This new trend was first highlighted by Connor in his study of the new politicians of classical Athens. Connor pointed to the fact that key political figures during the Peloponnesian War, notably generals like Cleon, Hyperbolus and Lamachus, did not come from the traditional elite that had produced the generals of the first half of the century.[73] These "new politicians" prompted a new kind of com-

71 Millett, ibid.

72 As defined by Van Wees (2001). For the theory of the "classe media" in Euripides' tragedies, see Di Benedetto (1971) 193–211. For the equation of farmers, hoplites and the middle classes, see Hanson (1983), (1991), (1995). On the relationship between zeugitai and hoplites, see Rosivach (2002) 33–43; De Ste Croix (2004) 19–27; 50–51.

73 Connor (1971). On Cleon's social background, see Burriot (1982) 404–435; the modest origins of Lamachus are mentioned in Plut. *Nic*. 15; Hyperbolus is said to have acquired his wealth

munication in the Assembly, as shown by Connor and, before him, by Finley:[74] they presented themselves as belonging to the *dêmos* and sharing its interests and beliefs. The myth of the hoplite-farmer as the representative of good rural poverty must be closely related to this altered context of public communication, which established a strong, direct link between politicians/demagogues and the urban population of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. For the purpose of this book, it is important to bear in mind that the positive perception of poverty that we encounter in Athenian sources and the positive characteristics ascribed to the poor are understood in relation to an ideal of rural life and very rarely associated with the urban environment.

3. POVERTY IN ATHENIAN PUBLIC DISCOURSE: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Public Discourse and its Sources

A good part of the literary record for classical Athens consists of sources that presuppose communication between the author and an audience gathered on specific official occasions in public places. These public places included the Pnyx – the hill on the Agora where the Assembly gathered – the *dikastêria* (the law courts in the Agora), the theatre of Dionysus at the foot of the Acropolis and the *dêmosion sêma*, the public burial ground in the *Kerameikos* – to name only some of the main public gathering places of ancient Athens. The Athenians gathered in these places on fixed occasions precisely to listen to public speeches or watch dramatic performances. Participation in public gatherings – either as audience or as speaker – was a right of every Athenian citizen. Public gatherings could be held for a variety of reasons, including entertainment, competition, public education (for example, plays or ceremonies such as public burials) and decision making (Assembly meetings in which different proposals on domestic and foreign policy were submitted to a public vote). Literary sources related to public communication constitute a very large part of the extant literary record of classical Athens. They include above all dramas (both comedies and tragedies) and public and private speeches (forensic, political and epideictic). It is obvious that when dealing with these kinds of sources – which we have in the form of written texts, but the Athenians will have experienced primarily as oral communication – ancient historians must not overlook the fact that their content was aimed at a more or less wide audience for a well-defined purpose. The ultimate goal of all these different types of public communication was to win the audience's favour: the ballots cast by the jurors in a *dikastêrion*, the votes to award a prize for a play and the raised hands to vote for a public decision in the Assembly

from selling lamps (Ar. *Eq.* 1315). He is described as 'wretched' (*mochthêros*) by Aristophanes (*Eq*. 1304) and Thucydides (8.73.3), implying a poor social background.

74 Finley (1962); cf. Connor (1971); Ober (1989); Mann (2007).