

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE POLITICS OF ENTITLEMENT

Introduction: beyond need and greed

Discussions of economic growth in antiquity have been primarily concerned with whether or not it occurred.¹ Can we, from the array of unsystematic and often random information we have about individual and community wealth, and in the face of our very considerable ignorance about even such basic matters as population levels, find ways of measuring either aggregate or *per capita* growth? The second focus of scholarly energy has been on how growth might have been achieved, on levels of productivity and what limited them, on how institutions might have impeded or facilitated growth, and on the degree to which barriers may have been deliberately removed over time and growth consciously encouraged.² This paper is not directly interested in either of those sets of questions. It is interested in who wanted growth in the first place.³

The default assumption in discussions of growth often seems to be, at least implicitly, that it is brought about either by need or by greed. The desire of individuals to satisfy their needs more fully leads to an increase in, at the very least, aggregate productivity, and might be expected inevitably to drive growth from the supply side. The desire of individuals to increase their consumption drives growth from the demand side. The default assumptions tend to stop there, as if what counts as need is absolute, a matter of a certain minimum number of calories or 'wheat equivalent' a day, and as if greed is simply part of human nature.

Only very minimal historical reflection is required to reveal that need is assessed very differently by different individuals in different circumstances. An episode in Greek history strikingly illustrates this. Xenophon tells how the besieged Phliasians caused enormous puzzlement to the besieging Spartans. The Spartans knew exactly how

¹ This paper was written at the request of Wim Jongman and to his specifications for a small and stimulating conference held in Groningen in September 2007. I am grateful to Wim for the invitation, to all gathered on that occasion for their engagement, and to Peter Garnsey, Myles Lavan, Hans van Wees, Caroline Vout, and an anonymous reader for *CCJ* for their help, encouragement, and criticism.

² Hopkins (1987), (1980); Millett (2001), Morris (2004), Temin (2001), (2006), Wilson (2002), (2006).

³ Strictly, since the concept of 'economic growth' as such is never formulated in antiquity, this paper is concerned with who was interested in engaging in the sorts of economic behaviour which caused growth, and why they engaged in such behaviour.

much grain the Phliasians had in store, yet the Phliasians continued to hold out well beyond the point at which all the grain should have been consumed in daily rations. The truth was that what was needed in order to be active and feel satisfied was one thing; what was needed to survive was another. This episode both reveals how easy it is, and not just for Spartans, to assume that the arbitrary figure for daily rations has to be what is actually needed in all circumstances, and how possible it is to vary that assumption without threatening life (the Phliasians had gone onto half rations: Xenophon *Hellenika* 5.3.21). But if need is not invariable, greed too is hardly an absolute insatiability. Such insatiability could be imagined in antiquity—it is imagined in myth in the insatiable appetite of an Erysichthon—but insatiable greed was regarded as a pathological condition.⁴

If we accept that both need and greed are socially conditioned, that they depend upon ‘life circumstances’ and do not come ready attached to individual lives, then the important questions when it comes to what brings about economic growth become not questions of personal physiology or psychology but questions of social relations and social organization. What are the mechanisms within a society which determine what counts as need? What are the social and ideological circumstances which encourage ‘greed’? Those questions are fundamentally political questions because both need and greed are relative. What is it that determines the minimum level of consumption in any given political society? What forces in any particular society encourage, and what limit, attempts to increase their level of consumption by those who consume the most?

In this paper I argue that one enlightening approach to these questions is through the notion of entitlement. Actual and aspirational entitlement can be seen to provide an important economic motor in the Greek and Roman world. Entitlement is a notion that has been variously employed by social scientists. In discussions of distributive justice the notion of entitlement is employed to insist that production and distribution are not two things but one thing, that ‘things come into the world already attached to people having entitlements over them’.⁵ Economists, concerned to describe the real world rather than the perfectly just utopia, talk instead of entitlement as ‘the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces’.⁶

The notion of ‘entitlement’ has three advantages. Because entitlement is necessarily and obviously neither absolute, as need is normally taken to be, nor purely personal,

⁴ On greed in Greek society see Balot (2001).

⁵ Nozick (1974) 159.

⁶ Sen (1981) 1–8. For application of this to the ancient world see Garnsey (1988) 33, Jongman (2006) 252.

as greed is taken to be, but a social construct, it offers a way of understanding how individual actions are coordinated and why economic models must work at the scale of a whole society. Second, it encompasses not merely goods and services but also rights, and so encourages us to see the connections between economy, society, and politics. Entitlement reveals how political decisions have economic consequences, and how changes in the nature of the economy have political effects. Third, entitlement cannot be reduced to either the prescriptive or the descriptive: it always carries implications of what is morally right, what I have referred to above as ‘aspirational entitlement’, but at the same time it points to the way in which those rights play out in any given social and political situation: the gap between the sense of moral claim and the nature of the real claim is a motivating force for human action.

The paper takes the form of a chronological survey of engagement with questions of entitlement from the earliest Greek literature through to the Roman empire. The first section is concerned to establish that entitlement was a live issue in Homeric epic and the poems of Hesiod. The second section explores how issues of entitlement might map onto our reconstruction of the political history of archaic Greece. The third section takes up recent concerns with the effects of the invention of coinage and asks whether the invention of a medium which enabled easy conversion of all other values into a single commodity caused issues of entitlement to be viewed differently. The fourth and fifth sections address the question of the effect that the greater effective entitlement that came with democracy had upon the economy of classical Greece. The sixth, seventh, and eighth sections turn attention to Rome. The sixth section traces changing entitlements through the changing constitutional arrangements at Rome, the seventh looks at the economic consequences of social structure, and the eighth at entitlement in a world empire.

There are clearly many more texts that might be discussed and many more historical situations that might be explored. This paper simply passes by, for example, the theoretical discussions of Plato, Aristotle, and Hellenistic philosophers, the world of the Hellenistic kingdoms and of Hellenistic cities, and many aspects of the Roman empire. For the aim of the paper is not to give a definitive account or tell an exhaustive history, but to draw attention to the way in which bringing notions of entitlement into play can illuminate our understanding of the ancient economy and of how the economy changed over time. In particular I will argue that we need to understand that changes in size and scale in the economy go together with changes in structure, and that those changes are linked in to political history.

Staging redistribution in early Greek literature

Issues of distribution are central to the earliest writing we have from the Greek world. Scholars continue to dispute the purpose and significance of the records written in the script known as Linear B recovered from Bronze Age palaces, and above all from Pylos and Knossos, but that those palaces were very concerned to count resources and record their distribution is manifest.⁷ To understand what determined the distribution would be to understand who was entitled to what in Bronze Age Cretan society and so to understand the structure of the political community.

More significantly for the historic period, the earliest works of Greek literature directly concern the politics of entitlement. The *Iliad* has as its central theme the course of a dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles about the division and redivision of booty. When Agamemnon is obliged to give back Chryseis, daughter of the priest of Apollo Chryses, who was part of the booty given to him, he assumes that he can in turn take instead Briseis, who was part of the booty given to Achilles. Achilles not only objects that it is not right for the people to collect back again what has already been divided (1.125–6), but complains that the division was unfair in the first place, since those who actually fight should receive the booty (1.163–8). Achilles then withdraws from the fighting, and although an embassy is sent to persuade him with gifts, he returns to the fray only after his closest companion, Patroklos, has entered the battle and been killed by Hector. Achilles then himself fights again to slay Hector. Questions of entitlement arise once more over the sacrifice of Trojans on Patroklos' burial pyre, signalled by the authorial voice as an evil action (23.176), over the prizes in the funeral games (23.532–613), and over the handing back of Hector's body to his father Priam (24.477–570).

In the course of the *Iliad*, therefore, we have examples of disputes over entitlement being settled by mutual agreement (Priam and Achilles), by third-party decision (Achilles in the funeral games), and by circumstances of one of the parties involved changing (Achilles and Agamemnon); we meet entitlements registered as unjust that are sorted out (Achilles and Agamemnon, Antilochos, Eumelos and Menelaos) and entitlements registered as unjust but never rectified (Achilles claiming the lives of the Trojans on Patroklos' pyre). Status is at issue in all the disputes over entitlement, and political power very much to the fore in the fundamental dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon—as the reversion to the question of Agamemnon's entitlement in Thersites' speech emphasizes (2.225–42).

⁷ Voutsaki and Killen (2001).

The issues of entitlement in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, composed around 700 BC, perhaps shortly before the *Iliad* reached more or less its current form, are rather different. Here the main issue of entitlement is the dispute between Hesiod and his brother Perses about the division of the property inherited from their father:

‘Let us settle our quarrel with straight justice, which is from Zeus and is best. For we had already divided the plot, but you snatched the greater share and took possession of it, greatly flattering the bribe-devouring rulers’ (*Works and Days* 35–8).

This is not simply a private dispute, therefore, for the role of local rulers in deciding entitlement is raised, and it is surely significant that the poet immediately goes on to describe the division of the carcasses of sacrificed animals between men and gods. The story of Prometheus and sacrifice, where Prometheus tricks the gods into taking the fat and bones and leaving men with the meat, is introduced in explanation of why men have to work: Hesiod maintains that ‘you would easily manage in a day to keep yourself for a year in idleness’ had the gods not hidden livelihood from men in anger at Prometheus’ trickery (43–4). Hesiod thus links dishonesty and unfair shares to the need to work, just as he encourages Perses to work rather than try to obtain an unfair share.

Neither in the *Iliad* nor in the *Works and Days* is entitlement a matter of equal shares for all. Achilles’ grievance is not that Agamemnon should not get a share different from the share that he himself gets, but that once the shares have been agreed by the people Agamemnon tries unilaterally to change what others get just because his own circumstances change. As in the various examples of gift exchange in the poem, where what constitutes a suitable gift depends on the relative status of those making the exchange (and may be misjudged by those involved in the exchange, as famously in the exchange between Glaukos and Diomedes, *Iliad* 6.234–6), so in the question of entitlement, it is the particular position one enjoys at the moment of distribution that matters: Patroklos receives the sacrifice of the Trojans because of the circumstances in which he died. Had he died in different circumstances he would surely not have been offered such victims. Entitlements are determined by current circumstances, but once determined they are not to be changed.

In *Works and Days* Hesiod’s concern is again with his brother upsetting what had previously been decided. The story of Prometheus and Zeus is a story where Prometheus manufactures an initial uneven division between gods and men, and that uneven division is not changed, for all that Zeus thinks men should be punished for

it. In both contexts the message is that one should stick with the division that one has been landed with. This is a conservative doctrine, not at all supportive of land redistribution. But it is not a doctrine adverse to economic gain. Before ever we meet Hesiod's own dispute he has offered us an observation on the dual nature of strife (Eris), which exists both in a destructive form, fostering war, and in a positive form in which she 'awakes to labour those disinclined to toil' and inspires men to work when they see others who are rich hurrying to plough and to plant, so that potter is piqued with potter, and carpenter with carpenter (*Works and Days* 11–26). The sight of the rich man at work inspires the listless: emulation of economic gain is the driving force. Entitlement is about perceptions of one's place in the world, and it is hardly surprising that entitlement and competitiveness go together in Homer and Hesiod—and indeed in early Greek history.

Entitlement and political change in early Greece

In the earlier part of the twentieth century the history of archaic Greece was often told in terms of the traditional aristocracy being challenged by a newly wealthy merchant class, who demanded political rights to match their economic position.⁸ In the late twentieth-century orthodox narrative of archaic Greek history, political entitlement plays a driving role but becomes divorced from economic factors. Accounts which give a central role to the hoplite revolution broadly follow Aristotle in connecting the form of army to the form of constitution.⁹ The 'equal' arming of a large number of men as hoplites inevitably created among those men a sense that the state which they defended was and should be theirs. But this creation of a group, equally entitled to political influence by their military role, is most frequently portrayed as economically conservative. Indeed, the emphasis on the hoplite revolution lying behind archaic tyranny was developed as a counter to economic explanations of tyranny.¹⁰ Such economic explanations drove archaic Greek political developments in general, and tyranny in particular, by the motor of newly wealthy traders or entrepreneurs who had gained a monopoly in particular economic niches, and presented disparities between inherited status and acquired wealth as the source of discontent, and as breeding claims to political entitlement. By contrast, champions of the hoplite revolution have generally thought of hoplites as drawn from the stock

⁸ Cf. Thomson (1941) ch. 6; the shadow of this position can still be seen in Finley (1970).

⁹ Cf. Murray (1980) and Snodgrass (1980).

¹⁰ Above all that of Ure (1922).

of the adequately well-off peasantry, and the political entitlements which they claimed as generated by their new military role, not by any significant change in their economic status.¹¹ Peasants tend to be modelled as pursuing ‘satisficing’ rather than ‘maximizing’ strategies, and effectively content with their economic lot.¹²

Recent alternative accounts of archaic Greece have down-played the hoplite revolution and seen political developments in archaic Greece in terms of jostling among the existing elite, rather than in terms of a new ‘class’ acquiring political might.¹³ This alternative account offers little space for political entitlement at all. While the elite as a whole may bolster its claim to power with assertions of birth-right, the rival members of that elite do not so much claim peculiar entitlement as compete with each other to dominate a political sphere in which theoretical entitlement is overshadowed by issues of practical control.¹⁴ On this scenario only when a Kleisthenes ‘adds the people to his *hetaireia*’ (Herodotos 5.66.2), that is, broadly, proposes to extend the circle of the politically entitled to include the people, does the entitlement issue become significant. Economic factors, which play an increasingly important part in the new account of the flurry of settlements made by Greeks outside mainland Greece, play very little part in the account of political events in the Greek mainland, neither as fuelling claims to political entitlement nor as consequent upon political entitlement.

The debate about whether ‘class war’ or individual competitiveness should be thought the dominating force in archaic history is at its most pointed with regard to Solon. The issue of Solon’s reforms in Athens, their motivation, intention, and effect, is one for which, as rarely in archaic Greece, we have contemporary evidence—in the form of Solon’s own poetry—as well as rich later tradition ([Aristotle’s] *Constitution of the Athenians* and Plutarch’s *Life of Solon*). Solon’s poetry talks both explicitly and implicitly about entitlement. In one statement, in which he also denies that tyranny was pleasing to him, he says that he does not think that the ‘good’ should have an equal share of the rich land with the ‘bad’ (frg. 34.6–8); elsewhere, by contrast, he claims to have made laws for ‘bad’ and for ‘good’ alike, and to have fitted straight justice to each individual (frg. 36.17–18). These statements, at least if taken at their

¹¹ Contrast Hanson (1995) esp. 226 who believes in a gradual change rather than a revolution, but believes the motor of that change to have been the transformation of agricultural practice which he claims to have taken place in the eighth century.

¹² Cf. Gallant (1991) ch. 2.

¹³ So Osborne (1996/2009), Hall (2006).

¹⁴ So although Theognis paints the elite as divided between good and bad, the reasons for being good are practical (disaster will strike the unjust), not to do with the ability to sustain a claim of entitlement to power. Where entitlement comes in is between the elite and the poor, who are regarded as incapable of achieving excellence. See van Wees (2000) 59.

face value, suggest that Solon was committed not only to equal entitlement to justice, but also to the belief that anything conferred by law should be conferred on all alike. This requires a commitment to equal political entitlement for all Athenians, but it does not require that that political entitlement carried economic entitlement.

Exactly how Solon might have squared these programmatic statements with his actual reforms is not clear. There are two issues here, Solonian census classes and Solonian land reforms. Commitment to law conferring equal rights on all sits unhappily with division of political rights by census class. Although Solon does not mention them in the extant poetry, one of Solon's fundamental contributions to Athenian civic structure was the census classes into which he divided the Athenian citizen population. Exactly what the classes translated into in economic terms has been debated (and illuminated) recently, but there is no doubt that, while all citizens had certain basic judicial, political, and civic rights, different citizens acquired different rights and duties according to their wealth.¹⁵ Such a division of political entitlement according to economic prosperity can only have encouraged all but the highest property class to attempt to increase their prosperity. Indeed, Solon appears to have felt the need to dampen the effects of such competition by introducing restrictions on e.g. what could be spent on funerals (Plutarch, *Solon* 21).

How Solon's denial that all should have an equal share of land squares with the further claim to have 'taken up the boundary stones which were fixed everywhere', freeing the black earth which had formerly been enslaved (frg. 36. 3–7), has been disputed since antiquity. Ancient commentators tried to work out where Solon stood on the two radical questions of redistribution of land and abolition of debts. The Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* quotes frg. 34 as evidence against Solonian redistribution of land, but quotes frg. 36 in favour of Solonian abolition of debts. The fourth-century author does so, almost certainly, because he anachronistically interprets the 'boundary stones' mentioned here as recording that the land so bounded is mortgaged.¹⁶ Recent commentators have tended towards two different viewpoints. Some think that the boundary stones marked the fact that the man who worked the land was a 'sixth-parter' (*hektemoros*) and the land carried with it the obligation to pay a one-sixth share to an overlord, so that the removal of the boundary stone was the removal of that obligation, and hence an act of restoring full political entitlement.¹⁷ Others think that removal of boundary stones must go with some land redistribution, though that redistribution need not result in equal land division.¹⁸ On the latter view,

¹⁵ See van Wees (2006).

¹⁶ The implausibility of Solonian mortgage stones was long ago demonstrated by Finley (1953).

¹⁷ For this view cf. Rhodes (1981) 94–5 and 175.

¹⁸ For this view cf. Osborne (1996) 221–5/(2009) 208–13.

Solon's belief in rich and poor having at least a minimal political entitlement in common would go with a belief that all citizens should also have some minimal economic entitlement.

That there was some crisis to which Solon's reforms responded is agreed by ancient and modern scholars alike. The popular ancient version, reflected in the second chapter of the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians*, is that the nobles and the masses were in conflict because the poor were enslaved to the rich, and that Solon was the first champion of the people, dealing with a situation in which slavery was embedded in the constitution. Absence of political entitlement is seen in this version to be linked to absence of economic entitlement, but Solon's action is primarily political; it changes the status of the enslaved people, and hence their Marxist class position, without changing their economic role. Ancient sources have rather less to say about the consequences of Solon's reforms, recording only continued civil strife, marked primarily by successive attempts of individuals to extend their powers regardless of constitutional rules. Modern scholars note the consequences in economic terms: some observe the unusually egalitarian distribution of land that seems still to have prevailed in the classical period;¹⁹ others see the Solonian prohibition on enslavement of Athenians as the beginning of classical chattel slavery, the use of which facilitated the mirage, at least, of citizen equality.²⁰

Getting the measure of the implications of Solon's actions for economic growth is difficult. The answer depends in part upon what one takes to be the size of the land lot with which the Solonian 'bad' (*kakoi*) or, if one follows the traditional line, the freed *hektemoroi*, ended up—that is, with what any minimum economic entitlement was reckoned by Solon to be. If the amount of land with which they ended up was large enough to enable them to meet their daily needs then this looks to be, both in its assumptions and in its probable effects, a primarily 'satisficing' world, with economic growth to be expected only to the extent to which individuals wish to increase their political rights by improving their census class. If, on the other hand, the normal land lot which the now free Athenian possessed was too small to support him and his family easily, the reforms may have encouraged intensification of farming practices and have led to economic growth. Recent work has made it clear that the production said by our sources to be required of *zeugitai*, the third of the four property classes, would make them quite wealthy, with land-holdings of upwards of seven ha. and produce enough to feed over 30 people; if this is the case then we know nothing of the wealth of most

¹⁹ Cf. Morris (2000).

²⁰ Patterson (1991) ch. 4; cf. Osborne (1995).

Athenians, who must have fallen into the bottom class of *thetes*, identified only by its failure to produce 200 *medimnoi* of cereal a year.²¹

A more powerful motor than either the needs of the poor or their desire to improve their political entitlement may have been the changes effected in the labour available to the rich. If the Solonian entitlement of all to personal freedom, without obligations to labour for others, led the rich to be deprived of dependent labour in the form of *hektemoroi*, and to seek to substitute dependent labour in the form of imported chattel slaves, the economic, as well as the social and political, consequences may have been significant.²² The acquisition of slaves will have increased the total population of Athens, and unless new forms of revenue were being acquired from outside, this must have resulted either in some impoverishment or in economic growth, in aggregate if not *per capita*.

Reflecting on Foxhall's demonstration that the *pentakosiomedimnoi*, linked by their name to quantities of agricultural produce, and presumably to annual production, were very wealthy indeed, Rhodes draws attention to the fact that Solon was 'sufficiently interested in the élite to distinguish from the class of *hippeis* a super-rich class of *pentakosiomedimnoi*'.²³ Taken together with the evidence for competition among the elite, provided by the attempted and successful coups by Peisistratos and by the earlier episodes of strife recorded by the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians*, this suggests that the Solonian division of political entitlement by these particular wealth classes reflected the strong emphasis placed on increasing their wealth by those who thought themselves politically entitled to dominate the city.

The over-all effects of all this are not easy to see. One possible source of evidence is the archaeology of Athens. Material prosperity is to be seen across the whole range of material production in post-Solonian Athens—pottery, sculpture, and architecture. In particular, the evidence for tyrants being responsible for the sixth-century investment in massive buildings is particularly weak in Athens. We should assume that the city as a whole was persuaded to invest in such projects, which were a new departure; this implies an ability to extract greater resources from the community than had previously been achieved.

How radical was coinage?

The suggestion I have just made, that political ambition may have stimulated economic growth, albeit modestly, comes into some conflict with an increasingly entrenched and

²¹ Foxhall (1997), van Wees (2006), and, for scepticism over whether the bushel equivalents go back to Solon, de Ste Croix (2004) ch. 1.

²² Patterson (1991) ch. 4.

²³ Rhodes (1997) 4.

influential position with regard to the ideological commitments of different sectors of the late archaic Greek city. Leslie Kurke and Ian Morris have argued for an ideological conflict between an elite and a middling ideology. Elite ideology, they suggest, was conservative, resistant to such things as the introduction of coinage and to commercialization/commodification more generally, and, at least in Kurke's version, 'anti-polis'. Middling ideology was progressive and embraced all of these. It is never entirely clear how these two discourses map onto society, in as far as Kurke talks sometimes of opposition between the aristocratic elite and the polis, while elsewhere both discourses are acknowledged to be products of the aristocrats.²⁴ But it is hard to see what would qualify a view to be an ideology if it had no real-world consequences. If Kurke is right, we should read off aristocratic elite resistance to commodification from the absence of references to coinage in archaic poetry and from the various Herodotean stories where coinage plays a negative role. In that case we can hardly expect that same elite to have been driving economic growth, at least not in any conscious way. At best, as in Nigel Nicholson's claims about aristocratic behaviour with regard to competing in chariot races, the aristocratic elite would go along with 'middling' ways only while at the same time doing their best to efface all record of their having engaged in those ways.²⁵

There are to my mind good reasons for rejecting the Morris/Kurke construction as incoherent and based on implausible readings of texts, readings which import exactly the assumptions they then find embedded in those texts.²⁶ But the claims of Kurke, together with the work of Seaford (2004) on the importance of the concept of coinage, do serve to raise the question of the role that commodification played both in encouraging a new view of political entitlement and in stimulating economic growth. Coinage was not necessary for the development of the market, but the creation of a single medium which could be exchanged for all things, and which served at the same time as a measure of value, a store of wealth, and a means of exchange, was not economically negligible.

At a minimum, coinage reduced the transaction cost for exchange of all sorts, and it will have encouraged thicker and more competitive markets and more ready availability of credit. It also enabled comparability of resources to be established more

²⁴For opposition between aristocratic elite and polis see Kurke (1999) 32; for elite and 'middling' discourse as both products of the aristocracy see Kurke (1999) 19 quoting Morris (1996): "two strands in archaic poetry (both, of course, the products of aristocratic poets): on the one hand, those aristocrats who "deliberately assimilated themselves to the dominant civic values within archaic poleis," thereby forging a "middling" tradition; and on the other hand, those who espoused the elitist tradition, claiming that their "authority lay outside these middling communities, in an inter-polis aristocracy which had privileged links to the gods, the heroes, and the East."

²⁵Nicholson (2005).

²⁶For comparable criticisms see Hammer (2004) and Kistler (2004) (cf. also Seaford 2002).

easily, and we might expect that this resulted in greater consciousness of the variety of ways in which equal wealth, and so equal political standing, might be established. The story in the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* of the man who made a dedication to celebrate having become a *hippeus* might encourage belief that competition for status became live. Nevertheless, this literary testimony is the only evidence we have for such a monumental celebration, and, despite the law quoted at [Demosthenes] 43.54 on dowries, the Solonian census classes seem never to have been measured in drachmas. Coinage did not, therefore, come to provide the language of political entitlement. Indeed, the definition of the highest class only, explicitly in terms of *medimnoi* of agricultural produce, may be a deliberate tying of the top status to ability to command the produce of the land. The role of coinage in easing socio-economic mobility seems therefore to have been somewhat restricted. The situation in Athens contrasts with that to be found in Republican Rome, described below.²⁷

The economy of the democratic citizen

Whatever the practical effect of Solon's reforms, a major change in political entitlement was undoubtedly effected by Kleisthenes. Crucial were the creation of the deme and of the Council. Athenians seem to have lived in nucleated centres of varying sizes across Attica from the eighth century onwards, but it was Kleisthenes who gave those villages a political identity and some form of standard constitutional arrangement. The constitution of the deme is only known well from the end of the fifth century onwards, but there is reason to believe that the basic structure of an annual official, the demarch, charged with various responsibilities by the *polis*, existed from the beginning. The constitution of the Council, also, may not have had its full classical form from the beginning, with the creation of the prytany system perhaps a development of the Ephialtic reforms of 462, or soon after, but the principle of having business prepared for the Assembly by a Council on which every village was represented by annually changing membership seems certain to go back to Kleisthenes. There is little doubt that, whatever the role of the people at large in Assembly and courts in the sixth century, after Kleisthenes the expectations of popular involvement in politics were very much greater.

Did this greater effective political entitlement lead directly to demand for greater economic entitlement? We might point to some signs that it did. The motivation, for instance, of the rider to the Brea decree (ML 49.39–42), which insists that the settlers

²⁷For further discussion of the effect of coinage see van Wees (2009).

to be sent to Brea be drawn from the two lowest census classes, might be seen as providing land to the poorer members of the people to enable them to match the economic status of the richer. But few other such pointers can be found: provision of pay for office notoriously does not, in the fifth century, include pay for attending the Assembly, and the pay for attending the courts was too minimal to effect a change in economic status and was never increased.

Why was this? Three related observations need to be made. The first is that almost certainly the Athenian citizen population increased markedly between 500 and 450, and to a greater extent than natural increase would allow.²⁸ The second is that, even more speculatively, the slave population of Athens increased markedly between 500 and 400 BC. The third is the phenomenon of fifth-century austerity.

If political entitlement is extended slightly it is reasonable to expect the newly entitled to desire to equalize their conditions to those of the previously entitled. But the volume of Athenians with a new entitlement, or the new possibility of actively using what had previously been a theoretical entitlement, was enormous, and ended up swamping the previously active political class. Scholars have often stressed that it took a while for the Athenians to realize their new powers. The politics of the early fifth century are rather different from those of the later fifth century, and are still dominated by 'old' families. But the politics of the early fifth century are equally clearly different from the politics of the sixth century. The struggles between rivals for political leadership in the 480s are not like the rivalries that led to the series of Peisistratean coups or to the quarrel between Kleisthenes and Isagoras in 508. Above all by their use of the new weapon of ostracism in the 480s the people asserted their control over political leaders: in Ober's terms, the new constitutional arrangements put the mass in control of the elite.²⁹ In this situation it made no sense for those newly empowered to imitate the behaviour of those who had been politically entitled in the past; this was a new political world. If we think that inter-personal competition was the driver that linked entitlement to economic growth in the archaic period, there are good reasons for thinking that extending more or less the full array of political rights to all citizens changed the nature, extent, and consequences of inter-personal competition.

Democratic politics demanded leisure time. Conspicuous leisure—as displayed in the gymnasium—was indeed something associated with wealth. But conspicuous leisure was as incompatible with political involvement as was work. There were less conspicuous forms of leisure that were not entirely reliant on wealth; leisure might also be a product of age. How quickly the Athenian popular courts came to be

²⁸The classic discussion remains Patterson (1981).

²⁹Ober (1989).

dominated by the elderly, as in Aristophanes' caricature in *Wasps*, is not clear, but this may not have had to await Ephialtes' reforms. Leisure might also be a product of possessing alternative labour, in particular the labour of a slave. How far down the social scale slave-ownership spread is uncertain, but various off-hand references (as in the disabled man's claim in *Lysias* 24.6 for public benefit so as to be able to afford a slave) suggest that slave-ownership was found among those whom no one would claim to be rich. If the need for greater, if not great, leisure put the acquisition of a slave at a premium, then Kleisthenes' reforms will have had the effect on the modestly prosperous that Solon's abolition of enslavement of citizens may have had on the well-to-do, that is, it may have led to their turning to the employment of slave labour.

We might expect the economic effect of the desire to acquire a slave to have been twofold: first, the acquisition and maintenance of a slave can be expected to have led to an attempt to increase income and therefore increase production, reduce consumption, or improve marketing (or some combination of the three); second, the presence of slave labour in a household where there was no slave labour previously will have enabled an overall increase in the labour available. Quite apart, then, from any permanent gain in efficiency which the measures taken to acquire the wherewithal to purchase a slave might have produced, the presence of a slave is likely to have increased production, in aggregate and *per citizen capita* if not *per human capita*. But this depends upon the slave owner not simply taking out of the productive process as many hours as the newly acquired slave worked, and there is some reason to think that democracy may have brought pressure for him to do exactly that. It is not simply that the public meetings, in *deme*, in the citizen assembly, in the council and in the courts took much time, but that taking an active part in political life demanded taking an active role in all sorts of civic occasions, including such things as religious festivals. All occasions on which citizens met were now potentially political occasions in quite a strong sense. In addition, in as far as the assumption of political responsibility led to an emulation of the life-style of the rich, it is possible that the social pressure to remove citizen women's labour from the productive process increased: the implication of the speaker's special explanation at Demosthenes 57.30–6 for how his own mother came to be engaged in menial labour, even though a citizen, reveals some of the perceived pressures in the fourth century.

It is very relevant here to note the general level of austerity which has been detected in fifth-century Greece, by contrast to fourth- or sixth-century Greece. Both the art (painted pottery and sculpture) and the poetry of the archaic period, more or less down to the Persian wars, make it clear that some Athenians vaunted their wealth by adopting life-styles that were conspicuously luxurious, often signalling that luxury by adopting

manners that smacked of non-Athenian or non-Greek ways.³⁰ From late in the fifth century onwards, such vaunting of luxury becomes apparent again, once more both in pottery and in literature. But the fifth century came to seem modest to fourth-century commentators, who contrasted the large houses and conspicuous display of wealth by their contemporaries with the more humble material possessions and life-style of even the most prominent fifth-century politician.³¹ It also seems modest to modern archaeologists, struck by the decline in surviving monumental dedications in sanctuaries, the apparent ban for half a century or so on sculpted stone grave-markers, the apparent cessation of epinician celebrations of chariot-racing victories (Alcibiades being in this matter as in others something of a throw-back), and the more general absence of a discourse of wealth and luxury in the literature (but *N.B.* the opening of *Clouds*).³² Whatever the explanation, the changed nature of competition in the fifth century seems clear: Greeks in general, and not just Athenians, now chose to compete primarily in non-material rather than material goods.

The economy of the democratic city

If *per capita* expenditure was to some extent ideologically constrained in fifth-century Athens, there is little doubt that public expenditure increased. Weakening the link between wealth and political entitlement at Athens may have reduced competition for greater personal wealth, but the sense of all citizens having the same entitlement drove demand for services provided by the city as a whole. Some services had long been more or less the prerogative of the city, and that did not alter, though the way in which the expectations played out might be very different. That is most obviously and dramatically true in the case of military expenditure: the Athenian decision in 483/2 to spend 100 talents accrued from the Laurion silver mines building 100 (or 200) triremes ('Themistokles' Naval Law', Herodotos 7.144, Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 22.7) was only the beginning of what must have been a continuous programme of naval renewal. This naval expenditure may well have been largely funded from 'new' money. We do not know the scale of the income from the Laurion mines in the late sixth century, but the implication of the story of Themistokles' Naval Law is that income on the scale available in 483/2 had not previously been available. Athens issues very large numbers of silver tetradrachms, in particular, in the fifth century, and the expectation should be

³⁰ Cf. Kurke (1992).

³¹ Dem. 23.206–8; cf. Dem. 3.29, [Dem.] 13.30.

³² See above all Morris (1998).

that the mines were steadily productive until disrupted by warfare in the Dekeleian war, after 413.³³ A second source of 'new' money was the tribute brought in by Athens' Aegean allies from 478 onwards to fund the on-going struggle against Persia. The various literary figures given for the level of tribute (460 talents: Thuc. 1.96.2 for 478, 600 talents: Thuc. 2.13.3 for 432) are difficult to reconcile with the Athenian tribute lists, but that Athens enjoyed income of the order of 500 talents a year from its imperial activities is entirely plausible.³⁴

The production of Athens' silver mines cannot be attributed directly to any sense of political entitlement, but indirectly the story that is told about Themistokles' Naval Law shows up very nicely how political entitlement is highly relevant. Herodotos says that the Athenians were going to distribute the money to give 10 drachmas to every individual before Themistokles persuaded them to do otherwise. That is, the Athenians literally cash in the sense that everyone ought to share in the profits of the state for a resource in which all Athenians will share equally, that is, their defence. In a similar manner the decision of Aegean states in 478 to join up to an alliance designed to promote their interests against Persia is a decision to invest in a shared resource. Their tribute payments gave them an entitlement to services from the Athenian-led naval force.

These decisions about entitlement had a variety of economic effects. The investment of the revenues from the mines in ship-building created a demand for expert labour that must have removed that labour force from agricultural production, increasing the demand for agricultural labour and the market for agricultural goods. The provision of tribute to Athens is likely to have increased taxation levels in Athens' allies, requiring higher productivity if living standards were to be maintained. All these effects will have been individually tiny, but cumulatively not without significance.

We can rephrase in terms of entitlement in a slightly different way the Athenian decision to embark on a major building programme on the Acropolis, incorporating an extraordinarily expensive new cult-statue of Athena Parthenos.³⁵ Whether or not there had been an undertaking after the battle of Plataia not to rebuild temples destroyed in the Persian wars (see Rhodes and Osborne (2003) no. 88), the decision to build the Parthenon and associated structures must have been a product of a sense that imperial Athens ought to have suitably grand structures. Thucydides makes Pericles observe the pressure which possession of empire put Athens under (2.63).

³³ For the tetradrachms see Starr (1970).

³⁴ On the Thucydidean figures for Athenian tribute see Hornblower (1991) ad locc.

³⁵ For the costs see still Stanier (1953).

The Parthenon can be seen as the product of such pressure, and nicely symbolizes the effective requirement for significant economic outlay that empire brought.³⁶

It is perhaps not inappropriate to connect the decision in c. 447 to embark on a building programme with the decision in 451/0 to restrict Athenian citizenship rights to those with two Athenian parents. Pericles' citizenship law both implies and establishes a high value on Athenian citizenship: citizenship is something to be restricted, too valuable to share around.³⁷ The building programme is the product of thinking that if Athens is the sort of community of which people want to be part, and where being part of it is so prized, it should have suitably impressive buildings which show off its peerless status. Demand for citizenship revealed the value of the city, and the city had to identify itself as valuable through the outward and visible sign offered by its buildings.

The sense that citizens are entitled to certain provisions from the state is strong in the *Xenophontic Constitution of the Athenians*. It comes out directly in such passages as 2.9–10 where the author claims that the city is made to provide e.g. sacrifices and gymnasia which the poor Athenian could not otherwise enjoy. The author takes it for granted that the funding for at least some of these provisions comes from the rich—to such an extent that the liturgies of the rich are mentioned only in the context of the volume of disputes those liturgies create that need to be settled (3.4). We have rather little data on the working of the liturgy system in the fifth century, and in particular on how the trierarchy worked, but for the fourth century it is clear that liturgical demands upon the rich were very significant. I have argued elsewhere for the effect of liturgies on the ways in which individuals ran their own economies.³⁸ This market involvement required to generate the surplus from which liturgies could be paid is not the least way in which the entitlement of citizens to services funded by the rich drove the economy. Quite a lot of our information about the liturgical obligations carried by individuals comes from law-court speeches, often from individuals listing their past liturgical performances in order to win the gratitude and goodwill of the people. Thus although wealth primarily brought obligation, there was also a sense in which it was recognised to bring an entitlement, if not to bending the laws of the city then at least to being looked upon benevolently.

The easy conversion of immaterial goods to material goods, and vice versa, which is seen in the various expectations of both poor and rich here means that competition in immaterial wealth as well as competition in material wealth has significant economic effects. And hence even the austere city of the fifth century can be seen to

³⁶This is a rather more important link between empire and the Parthenon than the question of exactly which treasury fund the money came out of. See Kallet-Marx (1989), Giovannini (1990).

³⁷Patterson (1981), Osborne (1997).

³⁸Osborne (1991).

drive economic growth through the various entitlements that it directly or indirectly promoted and encouraged. The obligation to perform liturgies when asked to do so was a formal one, which could be avoided only by engaging in a legal action (*antidosis*) to demonstrate that another had greater resources than oneself and should be obliged either to take on the obligation or exchange property. But there were less formal obligations upon the rich also: wealthy individuals were expected to be forthcoming with private help for the community, whether to buy in and distribute grain or to supply amenities and resources. ‘Euergetism’, as such benefits have become known, is a phenomenon best seen in the cities of the Hellenistic and Roman world, but such benefactions were already known and sought in the classical period.³⁹ It is a measure of the importance of these benefactions to the city that communities reciprocated the favours done to them with favours of their own, both immaterial and material. There is rather little gratuitous generosity here, and a clear if informal system of recognised entitlement. The community regarded itself as entitled to help from its richest residents—and indeed from rich communities elsewhere with which it could claim some historic connection;⁴⁰ the rich benefactors regarded themselves as entitled to honour from the community. The advantages for cities of euergetism lay in part in the exchange of symbolic for real capital: the added symbolic capital made the award of a gold crown worth very much more than the 1000 drachmas such a crown might cost. But it also lay in the flexibility which it gave the cities, when up-front donations might be reciprocated only over the longer term. Cities got resources they needed; benefactors got immediate political and social standing and real economic advantages (e.g. tax breaks) that put them into a position to enhance also their economic position.

The power of the people in Republican Rome

Both the Greek and the Roman worlds were predominantly worlds of cities, but from the beginning Roman cities differed in important ways from Greek. One difference was observed by the Greeks themselves as early as the third century BC, as Philip V’s letter (Bagnall and Derow (2004) no. 32) to the Macedonians shows: while Greek cities were in general parsimonious with grants of citizenship, Rome was generous. But did a more generous notion of political entitlement lead to more extensive consequences of that entitlement? Very much the contrary seems to be the case. Rome could be generous with citizenship because citizenship was not the be all and end all that it was, effectively, in a

³⁹ Domingo Gygax (2006).

⁴⁰ On this see Jones (1999).

place such as Athens. In classical Athens neither formal (Solonian census class) nor informal (*kakoi*, *esthloi*, and all those other evaluative terms used by [Xenophon] *Constitution of the Athenians* for social groups within the city) groupings had more than a marginal effect on a citizen's political power. In Rome successive divisions of the citizen body (plebeian: patrician; census class; *humiliores*: *honestiores*) seriously restricted political possibilities. In addition, Romans came to think much more in terms of conceptual social divisions (rich: poor) as reified groups of people to whom different patterns of behaviour were appropriate.

In the early republic the division of the citizen body between patricians and plebeians was absolute: only patricians could hold magistracies and only those with entirely patrician male ancestors could be patricians.⁴¹ There was no way into or out of patrician entitlement and so no amount of wealth creation could affect political status. The struggle of the orders was thus a struggle for rights of political determination, although it was also a struggle between the generally more and less wealthy, in a society where birth and wealth produced deference. Relations of patronage between wealthy and poor were, and remained into the empire, highly paternalistic. Patronage in the Twelve Tables has legal implications, but in classical Rome it was an extra-legal relationship.⁴² Although there might be economic elements to the entitlement which went with patron–client relations, it was primarily an entitlement of a moral sort.

For Polybius, examining the Roman constitution in the light of peripatetic political theory, the important divisions in Rome were between consuls, senate, and people:

‘if we confine our observation to the power of the consuls we should be inclined to regard [the Roman constitution] as despotic; if on that of the senate, as aristocratic; and if finally one looks at the power possessed by the people it would seem a clear case of a democracy’ (6.11 trans. Shuckburgh).

Polybius goes on to treat ‘the people’ as a block:

‘the people is the sole fountain of honour and of punishment. . . It also has the absolute power of passing or repealing laws; and, most important of all, it is the people who deliberate on the question of peace or war’ (Polybius 6.14 trans. Shuckburgh).

⁴¹ Brunt (1971) 47–59.

⁴² Garnsey (forthcoming a).

But it becomes clear that Polybius is assimilating ‘the people’ to the wealthiest of those outside the Senate:

‘the people on its part is far from being independent of the senate, and is bound to take its wishes into account both collectively and individually. For contracts, too numerous to count, are given out by the censors in all parts of Italy for the repairs or construction of public buildings; there is also the collection of revenue from many rivers, harbours, gardens, mines, and land—everything, in a word, that comes under the control of the Roman government: and in all these the people at large are engaged; so that there is scarcely a man, so to speak, who is not interested either as a contractor or as being employed in the works. For some purchase the contracts from the censors for themselves; and others go partners with them; while others again go security for these contractors, or actually pledge their property to the treasury for them’ (6.17 trans. Shuckburgh).

Polybius does indeed see an important role in Rome for the politics of entitlement. Primarily this is entitlement to political power. In his famous prediction of what would happen to the Roman state, Polybius imagines that the people, increasingly flattered by but also suspicious of its leaders, will in anger ‘refuse to obey any longer, or to be content with having equal powers with their leaders, but will demand to have all or far the greatest themselves’ (6.57, trans. Shuckburgh), with the result that mob rule follows. But although this story is primarily political, economic entitlement is clearly thought by Polybius to play a part, for he premises his description of the constitutional history on a description of the economic history:

‘When a commonwealth, after warding off many great dangers, has arrived at a high pitch of prosperity and undisputed power, it is evident that, by the lengthened continuance of great wealth within it, the manner of life of its citizens will become more extravagant, and that the rivalry for office, and in other spheres of activity, will become fiercer than it ought to be’ (6.57, trans. Shuckburgh).

Here again, however, Polybius’ eyes are primarily fixed on the wealthy with reputations to lose and ostentatious and extravagant life-styles to maintain.

The more closely we examine the ‘Roman people’ in the middle and late Republic the less reasonable it seems to be to treat it as a single body, and the more its divisions

seem to militate against entitlement proving either politically or economically important. Although patrician or plebeian ancestry could give or limit political opportunities, the prime division of the citizen body, between the equestrians and the various 'classes', was on the basis of wealth alone, measured in property terms. Throughout the Republic the order of voting was determined either by class alone or by tribe and class (where tribe was determined by place of primary residence).⁴³ As a result the votes of the urban poor were only exceptionally of any political significance. In this circumstance the acquisition of citizenship, which down to the middle of the third century was frequently granted to other Italian peoples upon conquest, and was granted to all freeborn Italians after the Social War, was, as far as all but wealthy individuals were concerned, more important for the legal rights that it gave, and the possibilities of serving with the Roman legions, than for its narrowly political entitlement.⁴⁴

It is characteristic of the late Republic that political and economic entitlement were seen as linked. At the level of whole communities, the desire to equalize the distribution of the spoils of empire played, at least from time to time, a significant role in motivating Italian communities. At the level of companies of soldiers, equal war service was equated with equal rights to land. At the level of individuals, political equality among citizens, at least, led to calls for access to land to be equalized, as in the Gracchan land reforms. But in none of these cases is it clear that the link between economic and political entitlement acted in any way as a driver for economic growth, except in as far as (colonial) land allotments might be so small as to require intensification of farming methods.⁴⁵

Whereas the barrier between patrician and plebeian had been so absolute as to allow no mobility, the classical Roman class system was dependent on assessments of wealth made at the ten-yearly census; in consequence those who were upwardly mobile in terms of wealth could also be upwardly mobile in terms of their political role. Moving up through the classes, however, had relatively little impact upon political role until the highest level, when qualification as an equestrian not only ensured that one's vote mattered but effectively, if not formally, was what made election as aedile/quaestor, and hence entry to the Senate, possible, perhaps as far back as the third century.⁴⁶ Service as a magistrate brought obligations as well as political power, and, despite

⁴³ Lintott (1999).

⁴⁴ To say this is to take a stand on the much-debated question of what the Italians were fighting for in the Social War. See Mouritsen (1998).

⁴⁵ Cf. Garnsey (1998) ch. 7.

⁴⁶ Lintott (1999) 71.

modern and ancient suggestions that some noble families regarded a place in the Senate as their entitlement, any such claim to entitlement would have been notable because exceptional rather than at all normal.⁴⁷ Arguably the important barrier to entry to the Senate was not lack of wealth but the difficulty of gaining sufficient support to be elected. Certainly that is what the two-generation gap visible between a community being given Roman citizenship and the first appearance of its members in the Senate suggests.⁴⁸

One further indicator that any sense of linked political and economic entitlement had little purchase in the Republic is the interest that we find in Cicero *De re publica* (1.43, 1.53) in not arithmetical but geometrical (or ‘proportional’) equality, that is the idea that such things as honour and power ought to be distributed according to men’s merits, not simply according to the fact that they are free men.⁴⁹ The two kinds of equality are clearly distinguished in Greek thought (e.g. Isocrates 7.21–2), but Aristotle is explicit that popular thought failed to make the distinction (*Politics* 1301a 27ff.). Cicero is hardly evidence for Roman popular thought, but he does suggest that absence of political entitlement was not simply a by-product of the detailed constitutional arrangements arrived at for other reasons (questions of who could afford to serve in the cavalry) but was also theorized as such.⁵⁰ Cicero further bolsters the conservative force of this distinction in his discussion of distributive justice, where he effectively transforms the view that everyone should get what is meet for them into the doctrine that everyone should retain their own property.⁵¹ Far from political entitlement being a progressive force fuelling jointly economic growth and the expansion of the effective base of political power, late Republican Rome sees politics and entitlement being effectively divorced, with economic entitlement being linked to military service rather than to political status.

The invention of the poor

The Roman ‘invention’ of the poor is relevant here. I have argued elsewhere that Rome’s unprecedented size created a distinct and permanent class of the poor where cities earlier had instead dealt with needs as they arose in any particular crisis.⁵² The

⁴⁷ On the turnover of the Senate and the weakness of the hereditary element see Hopkins (1983).

⁴⁸ Wiseman (1971).

⁴⁹ Harvey (1965).

⁵⁰ Cf. Schofield (1999) 178–94.

⁵¹ Garnsey (forthcoming b).

⁵² Osborne (2006).

civic ideal, which saw city resources shared across the citizen body and rich citizens baling out the city as a whole when food crisis struck, simply would not work in a community of a million, most of whom were landless and destitute. Permanent provision had to be made for these people, and by the state. But the effect of this creation of a ‘class apart’ which had entitlement to poor relief was to break any ladder of political entitlement that might inspire individual economic activity. The need to make provision for the grain dole certainly acted as a driver for the public economy of Rome, but it was part of the implicit bargain between the political elite and the poor that those individuals who received an entitlement of grain had effectively handed over their entitlement to political power (and created the phenomenon of ‘the Roman mob’).⁵³

This division between the poor and the rich which began as a division simply in Rome became a division of the population of the Roman empire as a whole with the development of a division of rights between *humiliores* and *honestiores*. The people of the empire who accepted this accepted that differences in *honor* (character, birth, office, wealth) justified a difference in moral worth: there was not one kind of free man in the empire but two distinct kinds of men.⁵⁴ As Martin Goodman writes: ‘The empire was in effect ruled by a wealth-defined elite paid by grants of privilege rather than salary, unified in their determination to keep power out of the hands of the poor’.⁵⁵ But the creation of such a formal barrier did not simply exclude some from political entitlement, it also very explicitly included others. The *honestiores* had a status to live up to, and with that status came expectations. Those who had been judged worthy had further to prove their worthiness. As the classical notion of political egalitarianism came to be replaced by the glorification of hierarchy, the elite were made to prove themselves worthy of their position in that hierarchy by the benefactions that they bestowed.⁵⁶ But the necessity of proving worthy turned expectations increasingly into obligations.

A situation where entitlement is replaced by obligation can easily become one where political and economic ambitions come into conflict. This is exactly the story that historians have traditionally told about the ruling classes of the Empire. They point to the way in which decurial office in cities came not only to carry with it financial obligations, but also, and perhaps from as early as the later second century BC, became hereditary and impossible to avoid: exemptions consequent upon taking on other duties were increasingly restricted until even entry to the Senate did not bring relief.⁵⁷

⁵³ Veyne (1976/1990) sections 3 and 4, which has become the classic discussion, puts the emphasis slightly differently; on the mob Brunt (1966).

⁵⁴ Garnsey (1970) chh. 9–11.

⁵⁵ Goodman (1997) 139.

⁵⁶ Zuiderhoek (2009) 71.

⁵⁷ C.Th. XII.i.122 of 390; cf. C.Th. XII.i.25 of 338. See Jones (1940) 180–91.

The pattern is revealed as less one of political ambition driving economic growth than of economic pressure quenching political ambition.

This picture is problematic.⁵⁸ Demographic realities alone meant that the curial elite, like the senatorial elite, needed to recruit new members in order to survive.⁵⁹ Not simply up to, but even after, the enfranchisement of all freeborn men in the *constitutio Antoniniana*, there were men who wished to turn newly acquired wealth into the traditional trappings of local political power—including freedmen, who played an important part in replenishing local councils, at least in the western empire.⁶⁰ The very way in which freedmen advertised their new-found status by having themselves shown wearing the toga on their grave monuments reveals the continuing attractions of political entitlement.⁶¹ And competition from new entrants to the decurial class confirmed the value of belonging and encouraged enough over-achievement of obligations to continue to drive economic growth. Whatever the external appearance of a static society, and however true it is that euergetism was the glue that maintained social order in the face of increasing real social division, the carrot of political entitlement continued to stimulate the economy.⁶²

Exploitation of a world empire

The greater the integration of the Roman empire, the less local government was a badge of freedom. The communities of the empire, variously indulged or limited by the centre, remained ever conscious of their dependence on governors—think only of Pliny in Bithynia—and emperors. But they nevertheless remained a stage upon which it was a reasonable ambition to strut. Local prominence might do little to gain one access to real power in Rome, but displaying to the local community remained important, particularly in communities that attracted visitors in significant numbers or imperial attention.⁶³ Although both sides, to judge from such texts as Plutarch (*Præc. ger. reip.* 814F–815A) and Commodus' letter to Aphrodisias (Reynolds 1982 no.16), saw

⁵⁸ Cf. Garnsey (1998) ch. 1.

⁵⁹ Cf. Patterson (2006) 189; Zuiderhoek (2009) 110. Jones (1940) 191 already recognises this.

⁶⁰ Garnsey (1975); and compare Garnsey (1998) ch. 2 on freedmen and the Roman imperial economy.

⁶¹ Koortbojian (2006).

⁶² The social and political importance of euergetism is the main theme of Zuiderhoek (2009). Zuiderhoek (2005) assesses the sums involved in privately funded building projects, but it is not the absolute amounts that matter but the perceived importance of generating a surplus in order to meet the expectation of generosity.

⁶³ Zuiderhoek (2009), esp. ch. 5; Salmeri (2000) 58–60.

the danger of erosion of local powers, both the invitations of cities and the independent decisions of emperors brought imperial generosity into cities in the empire. As with imperial demands, so with acts of generosity from emperors to cities, we might expect the satisfaction of local needs from outside, and the trumping of local efforts by imperial largesse to have dampened the ardour of potential local benefactors.⁶⁴ But just as external demands stimulated competition to meet them, so imperial benefactions simply set the height of the bar for local benefactors to match; it is not by chance that Hadrianic building in Athens is merely the presage to the still greater investment of Herodes Atticus. The imperial context merely further stimulated local patriotism.

Entitlement is most effective when it has an immediate focus. The dramatic reactions of an Achilles are impossible to replicate across a class and over a world empire. In the cities of archaic and classical Greece, which lacked the administrative or conceptual means to stimulate economic growth by compulsion, with low levels of taxation and no strategic programming of public investment, it was elite competition that provided the most effective motor for economic growth. And so it remained in the Roman world. Imperial demands were higher, but the local needs remained. The honour of public generosity was given in a new context, but it was given nevertheless. For all the greater scale of the Roman empire, and for all the easy physical mobility that Roman peace and Roman roads offered, it was standing in the local community that remained the most coveted social asset. Gone was the possibility of an immediate reward of untrammelled power offered to all those who sought to engage politically in a Greek city, above all in a democratic city, and at least to a restricted sector of Roman citizens in the middle and late Republic. But the political rewards offered in the empire to the city elite remained real enough to inspire greater economic activity. Even if the late imperial law codes replaced the language of political entitlement with that of political obligation, both the dynamics of local politics and the local economies remained dominated by competition for entitlement.

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⁶⁴ For a discussion of the relationship between imperial and local benefactions see Zuiderhoek (2009) 110–12.

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