The Invention of the Social?

Debating the Scope of Politics in the Greek Polis from the Later Classical to the Early Roman Period

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The status of activities such as communal dining in clubs "is relatively simple in societies like ours, when the social has a well-defined place somewhere between the state and the individual. But Greek cities knew nothing of such a tripartite division." So writes Pauline Schmitt Pantel, analyzing the place of "collective practices" beyond political institutions in Classical Athens.[1] Classical Athenians tended to insist on a simple conceptual division between public (or political or civic) and private, sometimes treating ritualized relations with the gods as a third category. Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke have recently raised the question of whether this type of

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1. Pauline Schmitt Pantel, "Collective Activities and the Political in the Greek City," in *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander*, ed. Oswyn Murray and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 199–213, here p. 212.

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analysis should be extended to the Greco-Roman world more generally: "Was it in fact true that antiquity lacked the ability to conceptualize non-familial collectivities and non-household spaces except through the paradigm of the public?"[2]

This tendency in Classical Athens, and well beyond it, left little intermediate space for a distinct category corresponding to the modern notion of "the social." This term can cover all human interaction, but I use it here in a more specific sense—close to that to which Schmitt Pantel appeals—to refer to the category of interactions which fall between public (or political) and private life, and are shaped by a corresponding mix of dynamics. I do not intend, for the purposes of this article, to evoke any particular developed modern theory of the social (contrasted with the political), but rather the very generic conceptual space (that is to say, a highly general notion, to be filled with more specific ideas) which provides the framework for most such modern reflections.[3] Many modern theorists have filled this broad conceptual space with ideas of "civil society" distinguished from the state, but the fundamental difference between polis and modern state makes the idea of "civil society" problematic for Greek history.

Classical Athenian denial of the social has deeply influenced modern estimations of the polis and its contemporary relevance, especially to theories of democracy and liberty. One tradition, that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Hannah Arendt, welcomes what is taken to be a general ancient Greek rejection of a social sphere, as a means of banishing from the polis the egoism, particular attachments and groupings, and unsystematic sympathy for individuals characteristic of distinctively social interaction.[4] This tradition has had a significant influence on modern republicanism, especially in France since 1789, where a dominant approach, inspired partly by understandings of ancient citizenship, treats any form of "intermediate" association or corporation as a potential threat to the unity and common will of the political community.[5] A rival tradition, taking much of its inspiration from Benjamin Constant, celebrates the freedoms born of the modern liberal-democratic embrace of an intermediate space between political and private life: a sphere of sociability, cooperation, and exchange which enables new forms of personal liberty distinct from the political freedom of ancient citizenship.[6]

2. See the introduction to Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke, eds., *Public and Private in Ancient Mediterranean Law and Religion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 1–9, here p. 3.
3. For a recent analysis, see Malcolm Bull, *The Concept of the Social: Scepticism, Idleness and Utopia* (London: Verso, 2021), chapter 1. For different French conceptions of "the social," see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français. La société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2004), especially part 2.
4. See, for example, Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), especially 38–49.
5. For this tradition, see the first part of Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français*, for instance 59–65 and 72–75; for its continuing force, cf. Catherine Neveu, *Citoyenneté et espace public. Habitants, jeunes et citoyens dans une ville du Nord* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2003), 198 (on immigrant groups).
6. See Benjamin Constant, *Écrits politiques*, ed. Marcel Gauchet (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1980). On the resulting debates, see Wilfried Nippel, *Antike oder moderne Freiheit? Die Begründung der Demokratie in Athen und in der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2008), especially

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This article will argue that some Greeks' approaches to this question developed in new directions after the Classical period, as part of the evolution of polis life and ideology prompted by the complex conditions of the expanded Hellenistic world (and Hellenistic monarchies) and, especially, of the early Roman Empire. For this later period there is wide-ranging evidence for thinking on these questions, not only from Athens but also from the many other Greek-speaking cities across the Mediterranean which published civic decisions in the form of inscriptions, or educated or hosted political thinkers whose works survive. I wish to stress that older binary ways of thinking survived—even remained dominant—across the Greek cities deep into the Roman Imperial period. Nevertheless, I argue here that, especially after c. 150 BCE, some Greeks, probably always quite a small minority, did begin to sketch more explicitly something like a distinct social sphere, neither purely public nor purely private, with its own character and virtues. Since there was never a wholesale shift towards acknowledgment of such an intermediate social sphere (or its value), this article should be understood as identifying simply a broadening of what was "sayable"[7]; in other words, what thoughts could be conceived and expressed in available political and ethical language. The new way of thinking is detectable only in quite a small proportion of surviving texts, but is nonetheless very significant for its departure from a well-established consensus.

It might be objected that my appeal to the notion of "the social," loosely inspired by modern debates, is illegitimate when it comes to reconstructing ancient ways of thinking and speaking, my main aim here. It is worth reiterating that I am using the word "social" to designate a very generic conceptual space. I do not wish to argue that any ancient Greek thinkers filled it with ideas closely comparable in character or sophistication to modern ones; rather that certain ancient Greeks gestured towards this conceptual space and the need to accommodate it in understandings of communal life.

My method draws on a rich seam of recent studies showing how ancient and modern ideas of "the political," distinguished from "the private," can be brought into fruitful dialogue: while the ancient and modern understandings of these spheres are fundamentally different, they are sufficiently contiguous to be studied together, as a result both of the genealogy which links them and of their conceptual and functional homologies.[8] If it is valid to compare and contrast ancient

chapters 7–9. In a distinctive new theory, with some loose connections with this second tradition, Bull, *The Concept of the Social*, has recently proposed celebrating "the social" as a model for a more anarchic, skeptical way of living together, free from the normative constraints of political life (note his reflections, on pp. 12–15, on Arendt's idea of "the social," which he repurposes as a positive model).

7. For this concept applied to the history of political thinking and interaction, see Willibald Steinmetz, *Das Sagbare und das Machbare. Zum Wandel politischer Handlungsspielräume – England 1789–1867* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 24–34.

8. See in particular Vincent Azoulay, "Repoliticizing the Greek City, Thirty Years Later," in "Politics in Ancient Greece," ed. Vincent Azoulay, special issue, *Annales HSS (English Edition)* 69, no. 3 (2014): 471–501.

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and modern understandings of "the political" (and its shadow, "the private"), then it is also legitimate to ask how ancients and moderns respectively have tackled the intermediate space between their distinctive articulations of these two shared categories.

Indeed, the development of the new strand in Greek political thinking identified above can be understood only in the context of evolving understandings of the political: new conceptualizations of the social were the corollary of subtle engagement with longstanding debates about the complex notion of *politeia*, which had always had a wide range of meanings, from "citizenship" or "the constitution" to simply "political life."[9] This article analyses the Hellenistic and early Roman-era development of these interlinked ideas, and their implications for modern interpretations of the polis and its evolution. It begins by analyzing the roots of the Classical Athenian aversion to acknowledging a social sphere. It then traces the gradual emergence in the Hellenistic period of ways of thinking about collective life which did not put the accent on politics but rather evoked social forms of interaction, showing that these new ideas could sometimes even replace older politics-centered language in mainstream civic ideology and polis-focused philosophy. It then addresses the extent to which new ideas tracked new realities of civic interaction: new language and ideas were probably partly a response to social, political, and cultural changes that became particularly pronounced from the later Hellenistic period (c. 150 BCE–14 CE) onwards, in connection with the arrival of the Romans and perhaps especially the changing role of civic elites and of club-like associations within poleis.[10]

This first half of the article might seem to revive an old stereotype of the Hellenistic and Roman polis: that of "depoliticization."[11] However, any claim that the Hellenistic and Roman cities turned away from rigorous politics, in practice or in self-understanding, needs to be carefully nuanced. I argue in the second half of the text that many Hellenistic and early Roman-era Greeks themselves reasserted the importance of political life for their cities. At the same time, some of them revised their understanding of the political world, as part of the same process in which they began to imagine the social. In doing so, they were engaging with, and adapting, the two main traditional ways of thinking about the scope of

9. See Jacqueline Bordes, *Politeia dans la pensée grecque jusqu'à Aristote* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982); Verity Harte and Melissa Lane, eds., *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

10. On civic elites, see Philippe Gauthier, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs (IVe–Ier siècle av. J.-C.). Contribution à l'histoire des institutions* (Athens: École française d'Athènes, 1985); Pierre Fröhlich and Christel Müller, eds., *Citoyenneté et participation à la basse époque hellénistique. Actes de la table ronde des 22 et 23 mai 2004, Paris, BNF* (Geneva: Droz 2005). For a recent analysis of the role of associations, see Vincent Gabrielsen and Christian A. Thomsen, eds., *Private Associations and the Public Sphere: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 9–11 September 2010* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2015).

11. See Paul Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1976).

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political life, or *politeia*. Ancient abstract ideas of *politeia* ranged from quite narrow conceptions which prioritized political institutions—close to modern theoretical notions of "politics" or *la politique*—to much broader understandings in which *politeia* subsumed much of the collective life of the community.[12] These latter understandings resemble modern ideas of what Claude Lefort called *le politique* or "the political," according to which everything that sustains the unity and structure of the community counts as political.[13] These narrower and broader conceptions of *politeia* and political life coexisted and interacted in the Hellenistic and Roman world, even within single cities—a continuation of the complex interplay which recent studies have highlighted within the Classical Athenian democracy itself.[14] Indeed, the tenacity of the narrower understanding of *politeia*, which perhaps even gained strength after Aristotle's work, was one of the crucial factors which stimulated new thinking about the social, as a way of capturing all the elements of collective life excluded from this view of *politeia*.

As well as addressing later phenomena and cities beyond Athens, this article also seeks to expand our picture of Greek debates about *politeia* and its relationship with other dimensions of city life by foregrounding assumptions and reflections expressed outside the canonical intellectual elite. These are well attested, especially for later periods, in the rich record of public decision-making preserved in inscriptions. This is a result of the Greek cities' tendency to publish on stone their most important decisions, especially honorific decrees in praise of benefactors, which set out the ideal civic virtues they had mastered. Though proposed by individuals or groups, these decrees had to be endorsed by the citizen body as a whole in the assembly; their inscription in turn established them as guides to civic life for all citizens. Such documents thus give vivid insights into civic rhetoric and ideology that are more direct than those offered by literary and philosophical texts, though they necessarily often lack the complex argumentation or idiosyncratic flourishes of literary sources.[15] Honorific decrees were frequently dominated by formulaic expressions, but, as some of the examples discussed here help to show, there was also considerable scope for citizens to adapt those formulae and introduce new rhetoric to reflect their specific concerns.

Giving prominence to this more routine political discourse, and integrating it with ancient political philosophy, requires us to draw on a range of modern

12. For the former, see Schmitt Pantel, "Collective Activities," for instance 203; for the latter, see Oswyn Murray, "Cities of Reason," in Murray and Price, *The Greek City*, 1–25.
13. See Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* [1986], trans. David Macey (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).
14. See especially Azoulay, "Repoliticizing the Greek City."
15. On these inscriptions as (neglected) sources for the history of (praise) rhetoric, see Laurent Pernot, *La rhétorique dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: LGF, 2000), 109–12. Compare the juxtaposing of literary and epigraphic texts to reconstruct changing ideology in Giovanni Salmeri, "Empire and Collective Mentality: The Transformation of *Eutaxia* from the Fifth Century BC to the Second Century AD," in *The Province Strikes Back: Imperial Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Björn Forsen and Giovanni Salmeri (Helsinki: Suomen Ateenan-instituutin säätiö, 2008), 137–55.

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methodological tools. My method has much in common with the so-called "Cambridge" approach of studying canonical texts of political theory in their broad discursive context,[16] with one key difference: I treat as significant contributions to political thinking not only lesser-known theoretical works but also the more pragmatic texts preserved in inscriptions. In this respect, my close attention to the evolution of the use of individual, interlinked terms (for instance, *politeia* or *symbiōsis*) across both theoretical and more prosaic discourse owes much to *Begriffsgeschichte* (the history of concepts),[17] though I am also interested in ancient concepts and ways of thinking which cannot be subsumed under any individual ancient word. In pursuing this approach, including attention to silences, tensions, and inchoate ideas, I am much indebted to the tradition of political anthropology within French ancient history. This approach, thus far usually applied to Archaic and Classical Greece, demonstrates how to move outwards from everyday political practice and representations to illuminate and reinterpret ancient philosophical theory.[18]

For this particular article, perhaps the single most important methodological model is Pierre Rosanvallon's "conceptual history of the political."[19] This is a central part of Rosanvallon's pursuit of a broader picture of modern political debates, extending far beyond formal institutions and theory. Delving into discussions about politics and the political in modern democracies, he calls for attention to be paid to the full range of reflections about life in common—including apparently throwaway remarks and ephemeral documents, from pamphlets to songs—in order to reconstruct the richest picture of society's understanding of itself.[20] Rosanvallon has shown in depth how, for modern France, expanding the focus of our sources can transform our understanding of ideas about the scope of the political, by exposing rich reflections about the value (and dangers) of associative and sociable activities which escape the grip of state power and ideology.[21] The representations of collective life in ancient Greek cities' inscribed decrees provide some of the best available evidence for such a "conceptual history of the political"—and of the social—for ancient Greece.

16. For example, Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Concerning Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
17. For example, Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006).
18. For example, Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *La cité au banquet. Histoire des repas publics dans les cités grecques* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1992); Nicole Loraux, *La cité divisée. L'oubli dans la mémoire d'Athènes* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 1997); or the contributions to Vincent Azoulay, ed., "Politics in Ancient Greece," special issue, *Annales HSS (English Edition)* 69, no. 3 (2014).
19. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Pour une histoire conceptuelle du politique* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2003); Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée. Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple de France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 34.
20. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democracy: Past and Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), chapters 1–2, especially pp. 74–75.
21. Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français*.

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Classical Athenian Debates

A quite narrow, institutional conception of *politeia*, close to modern notions of *la politique* (politics), was exploited by Classical Athenian orators. They could use the language of *politeia* to circumscribe the formal political sphere of assembly, council, and magistracies. For instance, in the speech *Against Timarchus* Aeschines states, regarding a bar on assembly speaking by those who have sold their own bodies, that the law examines those engaged in formal politics, not those focused on their private affairs (οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ νόμος τοὺς ἰδιωτεύοντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς πολιτευομένους ἐξετάζει).[22]

Significantly, in keeping with Schmitt Pantel's view with which I opened, the opposition Aeschines draws is between formal political life and the "private" realm (τὰ ἴδια). That is also the main relevant distinction made in other fourth-century Attic speeches,[23] as well as in civic epigraphy: a pervasive formula of honorific decrees throughout antiquity was that the benefactors had proved themselves useful both to citizens "in private" or "individually" (ἰδίαι) and to the whole polis or *dēmos* (people) "in public affairs" or "in common" (κοινῆι). The latter part of this formula captures formal interaction with the *dēmos* as a whole, mediated through its institutions, laws, and magistrates, as opposed to the one-to-one, more informal interaction conveyed by ἰδίαι.

As these examples begin to show, Classical Athenians usually treated the public or civic sphere and the political sphere as roughly coextensive, as reflected in the converging application from the mid-fifth century BCE of the terms κοινόν, δημόσιον, and πολιτικόν (approximately, "public," "civic," and "political").[24] Ritualized interactions with the gods (τὰ ἱερά) could sometimes be treated as a separate sphere,[25] but they were also often bundled together into this single, overarching category of public, civic, or political life.[26] As I observed in my introduction,

22. Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 1.195.

23. See Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 24.155; Pseudo-Demosthenes (Apollodorus), *Against Callippos* 52.28.

24. See Arnaud Macé, "La genèse sensible de l'État comme forme du commun. Essai d'introduction générale," in *Choses privées et chose publique en Grèce ancienne. Genèse et structure d'un système de classification*, ed. Arnaud Macé (Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon, 2012), 7–40, here pp. 11 and 13 (convergence of κοινόν and δημόσιον); Alain Fouchard, "*Dèmosios* et *dèmos*: sur l'État grec," in "Public et privé en Grèce ancienne. Lieux, conduites, pratiques," ed. François de Polignac and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, special issue, *Ktèma* 23 (1998): 59–70, here pp. 60 (on κοινόν and δημόσιον) and 67–68 (on δημόσιον and πολιτικόν). As these scholars show, there were also continued divergences between these three words: for example, δημόσιον could be used in a more technical sense than the others, to refer to polis property or other "official" items. See Macé, "La genèse sensible de l'État," 14–15, with table 1, pp. 463–71.

25. For example, Demosthenes, *Against Eubulides* 57.3 (τῶν ὑμετέρων ἱερῶν καὶ κοινῶν μετεῖχον); see Nikolaos Papazarkadas, *Sacred and Public Land in Ancient Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

26. Josine Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), especially chapter 2. For a similar view concerning polis land, see Denis Rousset,

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this all left little room for explicit recognition of an intermediate, mixed social sphere, outside politics but not private. This is not to suggest that no such sphere existed in practice in Classical Athens. Paulin Ismard has convincingly shown that sociological analyses of ancient Athens can distinguish a "relatively autonomous" sphere of civic politics and a broader social sphere of interaction, which partly overlapped with each other.[27] The latter included different types of voluntary relations and associations common in the Greek world, based on (for example) commercial exchange, conviviality, education, or unofficial worship of gods, all of which had overlapping private and public dimensions. Crucially for this article, Ismard also argues that the Classical Athenians themselves never explicitly identified an intermediate social sphere with its own dynamics, even as they participated in something that to modern eyes looks very much like it; the Classical notion of "community" (κοινωνία) covered much more than the social sphere, including also the family and the polis as a whole.[28]

Several reasons can be reconstructed for this Classical Athenian resistance to acknowledging a third space of polis life. As Schmitt Pantel shows, drawing on the work of Paul Veyne and Christian Meier, collective activities such as communal dining and the social groupings that resulted had been central to the Archaic polis. Indeed, those practices played a crucial role in the very emergence of ideas and practices of citizenship, still in gestation in the Archaic world.[29] Such collective practices remained important in fifth-century BCE Athens. However, newly sophisticated fifth-century conceptualizations were so predicated on treating political equality and political engagement as hallmarks of collective civic life that they normally left everything to the "private" sphere except formal polis activities—participation in political institutions, war, or ritual—in which citizens were demonstrably equal and focused on the polis (and any non-citizens involved were clearly subordinate to citizens and civic expectations).[30] This assertion of the newly dominant political over the social would have been a way of resisting some of the hierarchical and fissiparous tendencies of the Archaic legacy, in particular the threat that informal groupings could enable patronage or faction-building.

As early as the later fifth century, however, some Athenian rhetoric pushes against the sharp "public"/"private" (κοινόν/ἴδιον) distinction, even while continuing to uphold it. Thucydides' Pericles gestures towards an intermediate social sphere

"Sacred Property and Public Property in the Greek City," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 133 (2013): 113–33.

27. Paulin Ismard, *La cité des réseaux. Athènes et ses associations (VIe–Ier siècle av. J.-C.)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010), especially 409; cf. more recently, for Hellenistic Rhodes, Christian A. Thomsen, *The Politics of Association in Hellenistic Rhodes* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), chapters 7–8.

28. Ismard, *La cité des réseaux*, 14–15 and 31.

29. Ibid., chapter 1; Alain Duplouy, "The So-Called Solonian Property Classes: Citizenship in Archaic Athens," in Azoulay, "Politics in Ancient Greece," 411–39.

30. Schmitt Pantel, "Collective Activities," 204, discussing Christian Meier, *Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), and Paul Veyne, "Critique d'une systematization : les *Lois* de Platon et la réalité," *Annales ESC* 37, no. 5/6 (1982): 883–908.

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in his argument that the Athenians conduct their civic life (πολιτεύομεν) in a spirit of freedom evident not only in their public affairs (τά πρὸς τὸ κοινόν), but also in their lack of suspicion in everyday dealings with one another (ἐς τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὑποψίαν).[31] However, he immediately resolves this apparent contrast between political and social life into the familiar, less nuanced opposition between "public" and "private," attributing social relations to the latter: despite the easy-going approach to private affairs (τὰ ἴδια) he has just sketched, Thucydides' Pericles stresses that the Athenians are very respectful of the law in formal civic affairs (τὰ δημόσια).[32]

This pushing at the bounds of the "public"/"private" (κοινόν/ἴδιον) distinction became more intense in the fourth century BCE. In his *Against Timocrates*, while arguing against leniency towards those who transgress in public life, Demosthenes suggests that the laws of a polis are concerned with two sets of questions: first, with how we should treat one another, have (business) dealings, determine how to behave in private affairs, and live together in general (δι' ὧν χρώμεθ' ἀλλήλοις καὶ συναλλάττομεν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἰδίων ἃ χρὴ ποιεῖν διωρίσμεθα καὶ ζῶμεν ὅλως τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτούς); and, second, with how each individual should behave towards the collective polis (τῷ κοινῷ τῆς πόλεως) if he wishes to engage in politics (πολιτεύεσθαι) and claims to care for the city.[33] The first category once again gestures towards a third sphere of social interaction, not least because Demosthenes lists the issue of how citizens should interact with one another separately to that of how they should regulate their "private" life. Nonetheless, when he seeks in the next sentence to summarize the two categories he has to fall back, like Thucydides' Pericles, on the κοινόν/ἴδιον dichotomy, identifying social relations with "the private" (τὸ ἴδιον): laws "concerning private affairs" (περὶ τῶν ἰδίων) must be gentle and humane (ἠπίως κεῖσθαι καὶ φιλανθρώπως) for the benefit of the common people, but those concerning relations with the civic sphere (περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὸ δημόσιον) must be harsh and severe, so that those engaged in formal politics (οἱ πολιτευόμενοι) will not wrong the people. Demosthenes thus expresses an inchoate division between a strictly political sphere, demanding stern rules and austere virtues, and a sphere of informal interaction between citizens, requiring gentle, humane virtues. This division partly prefigures many of the Hellenistic and Roman developments that will be analyzed below. However, Demosthenes does not explicitly identify the latter sphere as something separate from, and richer than, "the private."[34]

If practical rhetoric started almost to call out for a more explicit, systematic recognition of a distinct social sphere, this might have been expected to push fourth-century intellectuals in that direction. In reality, however, they did not take that conceptual leap, presumably still wary of the consequences for civic equality and solidarity of social interaction free from political scrutiny. As Vincent Azoulay

31. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.37.2–3.
32. For this interpretation, see Vincent Azoulay, "Isocrate, Xénophon ou le politique transfiguré," *Revue des études anciennes* 108, no. 1 (2006): 133–53, here pp. 135–36.
33. Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 24.192–93.
34. Compare similar dynamics in Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 18.268.

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has shown, adapting Schmitt Pantel's view,[35] those fourth-century intellectuals who took account of this trend did not so much distinguish social from political life as expand the scope of *politeia* to cover much of what is classed in modern political theory as *le politique* (the political), including a much wider range of interactions and notably the informal ones of symposium, club, or chance meeting. Azoulay draws attention to the speech attributed in Xenophon's *Hellenica* to the herald Kleokritos in 403 BCE, urging his opponents in Athens' civil war to recognize the two sides' wealth of shared experiences, including religious and educational ones, and their great political importance as foundations of concord (ὁμόνοια).[36]

As Azoulay has also demonstrated, this example forms part of a broader attempt by Xenophon to focus political attention on informal customs, norms, and interactions, in dialogue with advocates of more traditional, narrower conceptions of *politeia*. In a similar way, Isocrates explicitly distinguished laws concerned with the private sphere of contracts (τοὺς περὶ τῶν ἰδίων συμβολαίων) from those laws, taken much more seriously by the Athenians of old, which deal with the everyday practices of citizens (τοὺς περὶ τῶν καθ' ἑκάστην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων).[37] His aim was not to class these "practices" (ἐπιτηδεύματα) as a third category between private and political, but rather to show, like Xenophon, that any effective understanding of *politeia* or exercise of citizenship and political rule (ἀρχή) must treat customs and practices as intrinsic to political order, rather than supplements to it.[38] These ideas are strongly consistent with fourth-century philosophers' broad definitions of *politeia*, which partly built on traditional Greek thinking.[39]

Perhaps the richest Classical conceptualization of the collective life of a polis beyond political institutions is Aristotle's discussion in his *Nicomachean Ethics* of the "communities" or "associations" (κοινωνίαι) which make up a polis, including associations of sea-travelers, soldiers, and demesmen as well as religious groups and dining clubs.[40] Significantly, however, Aristotle was not singling out these associations as a separate sphere from institutionalized politics, complementary but not subordinate to it. He still regarded the polis as a single political "community" (κοινωνία), an overarching structure which actually subsumes and regulates the other κοινωνίαι. For Aristotle this hierarchy is necessary because the polis strives towards what is advantageous for life as a whole, whereas its constituent

35. Schmitt Pantel, "Collective Activities," 207–208 and 212, argues that collective activities beyond political institutions came to be conceived in the fourth century as making up a very general, broad category of the "common" (κοινόν), of which political life was merely one component; this interpretation does not quite match the texts she cites (see what follows on Xenophon and Aristotle). Compare too François de Polignac and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, introduction to "Public et privé en Grèce ancienne. Lieux, conduites, pratiques," special issue, *Ktèma* 23 (1998): 5–13, here pp. 7–8.

36. See Azoulay, "Repoliticizing the Greek City."

37. Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 4.78.

38. See especially Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 12.144; Azoulay, "Isocrate, Xénophon ou le politique transfiguré," 136–40.

39. For example, Plato, *Republic* or *Apology* 30b–32a; Aristotle, *Politics*, book 8.

40. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1160a8–23.

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associations focus on one advantage related to their particular purpose (such as safe travel or pleasurable dining).[41] Any form of organized collective life with its own character and goals, independent from the polis' unifying political project of the good life in common for all, would be tantamount to factionalism or even strife (*stasis*). Aristotle's approach was consistent with Athenian practice: sub-polis associations tended to be structured like poleis-in-microcosm, and were also subject to supervision by the polis as a whole.[42]

This overview of Classical Athenian approaches can shed new light on a question which is currently the subject of intense debate. Did Classical Athenians understand citizenship (πολιτεία) as a broad composite of different forms of participation in the collective life of the polis, as Josine Blok has recently argued with an emphasis on its religious dimension?[43] Or did they rather conceive citizenship principally as a matter of participation in formal political institutions, a traditional view restated forcefully by Pierre Fröhlich in response to Blok?[44] The most convincing response is to recognize that the two views coexisted within Classical Athenian thought, and even within the thinking of an individual such as Aristotle.[45] This must be partly explained by the widely shared reluctance to recognize a third, social sphere of polis life, for fear this would open a back door to inequality or factionalism. This reluctance meant that, when confronted with interactions which did not easily fit into the public/private binary, two options remained: to accommodate them, first, within a particularly capacious notion of the private sphere (as did Demosthenes and Thucydides' Pericles) or, second, within a particularly capacious notion of the political sphere (like Xenophon, Isocrates, and Aristotle in the examples above). These two options carried with them correspondingly narrow and broad conceptions of *politeia* (πολιτεία), which were mutually sustaining because each captured something important but not, by itself, the full complexity of citizenship.

Asserting the Social over the Political

Perhaps the first emphatic challenge to the overwhelmingly political conception of communal life dominant in Classical Athens came from Epicurus in the later fourth century BCE. Epicurus urged wise men to break free of the "prison" of routine and political life (ἐκ τοῦ περὶ τὰ ἐγκύκλια καὶ πολιτικὰ δεσμωτηρίου),[46]

41. See Ismard, *La cité des réseaux*, 13–15.
42. Ibid., 405–406.
43. Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*.
44. Pierre Fröhlich, "La citoyenneté grecque entre Aristote et les modernes," *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 27 (2016): 91–136.
45. Contrast the institutional focus of book 3 of Aristotle's *Politics* with the broader vision of books 7 and 8.
46. Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), text 22D = Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 58.

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encouraging them not to engage in politics (πολιτεύεσθαι).[47] As part of this argument, he developed a vision of the desirable common life that was strongly social rather than political, excluding conventional political institutions and activities. To describe the human interactions which give rise to shared standards of justice and the common good, he referred to participation in mutual "community" or reciprocal "dealings" (ἐν τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινωνίᾳ, ἐν ταῖς μετ' ἀλλήλων συστροφαῖς); those who achieved reliable relations with their neighbors "lived together most pleasantly" (ἐβίωσαν μετ' ἀλλήλων ἥδιστα).[48] Citizenship is not entirely absent from this picture—in one instance, the community (κοινωνία) in question is qualified as being "of the fellow citizens" (τῶν συμπολιτευομένων)[49]—but Epicurus' emphasis, perpetuated by his successor Hermarchus,[50] was squarely on more informal social intercourse.

This counter-cultural stress on the social dimension of communal interaction was paralleled in some third-century accounts of civic life by outsiders. In his travelers' guide to Athens, for example, Heraclides Creticus offers a sociocultural portrait of the city's monuments, festivals, spectacles, and philosophy, without any trace of its political institutions.[51] The "social" approach to civic life was not, however, immediately echoed in the polis discourse and political theory of citizens themselves, who were predictably hostile to it. This is attested in a rich corpus of inscriptions from the early and mid-Hellenistic period (late fourth–early second century BCE). Many of the most revealing derive from the eastern Aegean and western Asia Minor, the region which dominates the rest of this article. These presented an image of communal life very familiar from the Classical Athenian democracy: a unified space of formal civic activities, including combat and ritual but especially collective political participation, governed by a single set of norms focused on citizen equality, collective autonomy, and the common good.[52] This left little room for a distinct

47. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, text 22Q = Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers* 10.119.

48. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, texts 22A–C = Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines (Kyriai Doxai)* 33, 36–37, and 40.

49. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, texts 22A–C = Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines (Kyriai Doxai)* 38.

50. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, text 22M = Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 1.7 (note εἰς τὴν τοῦ βίου κοινωνίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὰς πρὸς ἀλλήλους πράξεις); see Antonina Alberti, "The Epicurean Theory of Law and Justice," in *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy; Proceedings of the Sixth Symposium Hellenisticum*, ed. Andre Laks and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 161–90, here p. 165.

51. See Christian Habicht, *Athens from Alexander to Antony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 171–72.

52. See Gauthier, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs*; Volker Grieb, *Hellenistische Demokratie. Politische Organisation und Struktur in freien griechischen Poleis nach Alexander dem Großen* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2008); John Ma, "Whatever Happened to Athens? Thoughts on the Great Convergence and Beyond," in *The Hellenistic Reception of Classical Athenian Democracy and Political Thought*, ed. Mirko Canevaro and Benjamin Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 277–97. For Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean, see examples from Eresos (Peter J. Rhodes and Robin Osborne, eds., *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 BC* [Oxford:

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social sphere. These inscriptions do not contain explicit reflection on the spheres of civic life like that attested in speeches and works of political philosophy for Classical Athens, but they repeatedly assert the familiar "public"/"private" (κοινόν/ἴδιον) division.[53] It might be expected that the more experimental political units of the early and mid-Hellenistic world, including new mixed foundations and unions of two or more poleis in *sympoliteiai* or federations, would have encouraged a reassessment of the spheres of collective life. There is, however, no clear sign in our admittedly limited evidence for these communities' ideology that they radically questioned the κοινόν/ἴδιον binary at this stage.[54]

This basic binary was to remain a prominent foundation of Greek political consciousness even into the later Hellenistic and Roman periods. However, a more social conceptualization of communal life does begin to emerge in some literature and official documents of the second and first centuries BCE. This is strongly, but certainly not exclusively, evident in representations of interaction not confined to any one polis. Two different texts from this period—a second-century inscription granting privileges to the Athenian branch of the theatrical guild of Dionysiac Artists, passed by the Delphic Amphictyony (the federation responsible for the Delphic sanctuary), and a speech imagined by the first-century historian Diodorus Siculus for a Syracusan who lived four hundred years before—praise the civilized interactions of humanity in general, said to be inspired by Athens' example. Between them, these texts present civilized human relations as based on "intimacy" (χρῆσίς), "trust" (πίστις),[55] "common life" (κοινὸς βίος), and "living together" or *symbiōsis* (συμβίωσις).[56] The abstract noun συμβίωσις, used to refer to social relations and sociability (and sometimes marriage), seems to have come into regular usage precisely in the second and first centuries BCE, though the root verb was clearly well-established much earlier.[57] All the terms cited evoked relatively open-ended interaction, which did not require common citizenship and political institutions but could suffuse the new Roman cosmopolis across the Mediterranean, binding together not only local communities but also more far-flung individuals whose interests happened to coincide.

Oxford University Press, 2003], no. 83), Erythrai (*I.Erythrai* 503) and Ilion (*I.Ilion* 25), in David A. Teegarden, *Death to Tyrants! Ancient Greek Democracy and the Struggle against Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), chapters 4–6.

53. For example, *I.Priene*² 6, ll. 25–26; 46, ll. 12–13.

54. For the evidence for federal states' public language, see the epigraphical appendix in Emily Mackil, *Creating a Common Polity: Religion, Economy, and Politics in the Making of the Greek* Koinon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 409–504.

55. *CID* 4.117 (118/7 or 117/6 BCE), ll. 11–14.

56. Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 13.26.3.

57. Compare Liddell-Scott-Jones, s.v. συμβίωσις, citing Polybius (*Histories* 5.81.2 and 31.25.10) and Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History* 4.54), as well as documentary sources. The root verb συμβιόω ("to live together") was used in earlier texts in reference to spouses or friends and associates (cf. Isocrates, *On the Exchange* 15.97; Plato, *Symposium* 181d): Aristotle even used the infinitive as a substantive (τὸ συμβιοῦν, "living together") to refer to friends' or associates' shared life (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1126a31, cf. 1165b30–31; *Magna Moralia* 1213a27–30).

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Crucially, in a much more substantial departure from past trends, this social conceptualization of human interaction in some cases came to supplant more political visions, even of internal polis life, in poleis' own discourse and political theory. This was far from a uniform tendency, but certain citizens and political thinkers came to deploy concepts previously used mainly to describe relations among strangers who were certainly not fellow citizens, and usually lived in different places, as central terms for praising interactions among citizens within a single polis. One such concept was "peace" (εἰρήνη),[58] and another was "humanity" (φιλανθρωπία). Though this latter virtue had featured quite prominently in earlier civic rhetoric, before the later Hellenistic period it was never used in inscriptions, and only rarely in literary texts, to refer to relations among fellow citizens of the same polis. After around 150 BCE, however, it became quite common to use it in this way across different genres.[59]

Concepts such as these cut across traditional political conceptions of internal civic interaction. Their intrinsic connection with relations among separate states, or strangers, carried connotations of flexible, voluntary interaction. As a result, when these concepts were applied to ongoing, intensive relations among residents of the same place, those connotations helped to conjure something close to social interaction. The word φιλανθρωπία ("humanity") also suggested unconditional benevolence, rather than justice,[60] which further distanced it from traditional political virtue. It often had connotations of top-down charity or patronage, very evident in Xenophon and Isocrates,[61] but it could also have a more neutral meaning of generous openness and compassion for others as fellow humans, consistent with its etymology,[62] which must have eased its adoption to describe relations among notionally equal fellow citizens.

In some exceptional cases, "social" language even drove out talk of *politeia* from contexts where it had been axiomatic. Greek cities vividly revealed their self-understanding in inscriptions recording how the citizen body had been reconciled after a period of strife, often with the help of a board of foreign arbitrators or judges. In the Classical and early to mid-Hellenistic periods, documents of this type tended to stress that the aim of the reconciliation had been to restore the polis as a structured political community of participatory citizens. Indeed, according to a formula attested several times in inscriptions from Hellenistic poleis, the aim

58. Benjamin Gray, "Reconciliation in Later Classical and Post-Classical Greek Cities: A Question of Peace and Peacefulness?" in *Peace and Reconciliation in the Classical World*, ed. Eoghan. P. Moloney and Michael S. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2017), 66–85.
59. Benjamin Gray, "The Polis Becomes Humane? *Philanthrōpia* as a Cardinal Civic Virtue in Later Hellenistic Honorific Epigraphy and Historiography," in "Parole in movimento. Linguaggio politico e lessico storiografico nel mondo ellenistico," ed. Manuela Mari and John Thornton, special issue, *Studi ellenistici* 27 (2013): 137–62.
60. Compare Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 24.51–52.
61. See Azoulay, "Isocrate, Xénophon ou le politique transfiguré," 148–51.
62. For example, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155a16–22; Polybius, *Histories* 4.20.1; cf. the Karzoazos decree from Olbia, discussed below.

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of reconciliation was explicitly that citizens should "conduct their political life" (πολιτεύεσθαι) in concord (ὁμόνοια).[63]

A decree passed by the citizens of Mylasa for their eminent citizen Ouliades, probably in the first century BCE, contains a section concerning his efforts to resolve disputes among his fellow citizens, which appears to perpetuate this tradition but also adapts it, revealing changes in civic self-understanding.[64] The citizens of Mylasa singled out Ouliades as an individual: he was not one member of a board of foreign judges charged with reconciliation, as in the normal Hellenistic pattern, but an almost king-like domestic benefactor, who rose above the civic fray to bring concord single-handedly. It was probably not unconnected with this shift that they also presented the results of Ouliades' reconciliation in a novel way: they quite literally "depoliticized" the familiar formula about citizens "conduct[ing] their political life" (πολιτεύεσθαι) in concord, attributing to Ouliades the different aspiration that citizens should "conduct their shared life with one another" (τὴν μετ' ἀλλήλων συναναστροφὴν ποιεῖσθαι) in concord.[65]

The implication was that Ouliades' intervention enabled citizens not so much to resume stable, free self-government (πολιτεύεσθαι) as to pursue in concord a more general shared life (συναναστροφή, literally "activity in common") of social interaction and interdependence, in which specifically political activities (free debating, voting, ruling) had no special priority. Indeed, those activities had partly been transferred upwards: other parts of this decree emphasize the personal leadership and financial expenditure of Ouliades himself, especially in diplomacy, a form of intervention which would not have been open to less wealthy citizens.[66]

The abstract noun συναναστροφή ("shared life") seems to have come into regular use, like συμβίωσις ("living together"), from the second century BCE: the only attestations earlier than c. 200 BCE are, interestingly, Epicurean ones.[67] In this case, the root verb συναναστρέφεσθαι is also scarcely attested earlier, though it does feature in an Epicurean treatise and even in a later third-century epigraphic formula in Delphian decrees granting the status of *proxenos* (a form of official representative) to foreigners.[68] The contemporaneous rise of the abstract nouns συναναστροφή and συμβίωσις in itself suggests a later Hellenistic search for a new vocabulary to convey collective relations that did not fit established models of the

63. See *IG* XII 4.1.132 (Telos, later fourth century BCE), ll. 4–5 and 38–39; *IG* XII 6.1.95 (Samos, third century BCE), ll. 16–17; *Tit. Cal.* Test. XVI (Kalymna, third century BCE), ll. 37–38.
64. *I.Mylasa* 101, ll. 37–46. For an example of its traditionalism, the preference expressed for mediation over legal judgement was a hallmark of Greek inscriptions concerning reconciliation: Astrid Dössel, *Die Beilegung innerstaatlicher Konflikte in den griechischen Poleis vom 5.-3. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 256 and 262–63.
65. *I.Mylasa* 101, ll. 38–39.
66. *I.Mylasa* 101, ll. 15–38.
67. Carneiscus, *Philistas* (c. 200 BCE), *P.Herc.* 1027, 4.21 (cf. 4.18 for the verb); cf. Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 18.
68. Carneiscus, *Philistas*, *P.Herc.* 1027, 4.18; *SIG*³ 534, ll. 7–8; *SIG*³ 534B, l. 8; *FD* III 4 175, ll. 7–8.

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public or political. From the second century onwards, συναναστροφή is attested in multiple sources. Many derive from later centuries, but already in the second and first centuries BCE it was used in inscriptions, Epicurean philosophy, and other literary texts to refer to relations of sociability or friendship.[69]

Downplaying politics in favor of the social was, as noted above, a hallmark of Hellenistic Epicureanism; but even the Peripatetics, the school most committed, through Aristotle, to the traditional polis, seem to have adapted their thinking in the later Hellenistic period in the same direction as the citizens of Mylasa. Perhaps the most famous claim of Aristotle's political theory was that a human is a "political animal," who can truly flourish only as a participatory citizen in a polis. As Julia Annas points out, the later Hellenistic Peripatetics adapted this central thesis to give greater weight to more general social interaction.[70] The anthology compiled in the fifth century CE by Stobaeus preserves a summary of Peripatetic ethics, traditionally attributed to the Augustan philosopher and teacher Arius Didymus.[71] Even if its authorship is ambiguous, this summary certainly preserves the themes and language of later Hellenistic Peripatetics.[72] When it turns to address Aristotle's *Politics* at its end, the text does repeat the claim that a human is a "political animal."[73] However, in its earlier elaboration of basic Peripatetic ethical teaching about human nature and relationships, the summary describes a human being not as a "political animal" but as a "mutually loving and communal animal" (φιλάλληλον καὶ κοινωνικὸν ζῷον).[74]

This partly picks up a claim in Aristotle's own *Eudemian Ethics* that a human is a "communal animal" (κοινωνικὸν ζῷον), but that is a specific description of humans' propensity to form sociable family bonds in the structured household (*oikos*) rather than mating randomly.[75] In the Peripatetic summary, by contrast, the more complex and general phrase "mutually loving and communal animal" evokes broader, more open-ended and voluntary forms of sociability and cooperation, with

69. For epigraphy, as well as the Mylasan text, see *SEG* 26.1817, ll. 11–14. For an Epicurean text, see Philodemus, *On the Gods (Peri Theōn)*, book 3, col. a, fr. 87 (Diels) (linking the concept with συμφυλία). For other literary texts, see the *Letter of Aristeas* 169 and 246; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 3.18.7 and 4.4.6; cf. 3 *Maccabees* 2:31, 2:33, and 3:5.

70. Julia Annas, "Aristotelian Political Theory in the Hellenistic Period," in Laks and Schofield, *Justice and Generosity*, 74–94, especially pp. 82–87.

71. Georgia Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics, Household Management, and Politics: An Edition with Translation," in *Arius Didymus on Peripatetic Ethics, Household Management, and Politics: Text, Translation, and Discussion*, ed. William Fortenbaugh (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1–67.

72. On the fit with the broader later Hellenistic Peripatetic context known from other sources, see Philip Schmitz, "*Oikos*, *polis* und *politeia*—Das Verhältnis von Familie und Staatsverfassung bei Aristoteles, im späteren Peripatos und in Ciceros *De officiis*," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 160 (2017): 9–35.

73. Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics," section 26 Tsouni, 148.4; cf. Robert W. Sharples, *Peripatetic Philosophy, 200 BC to AD 200: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 15A, section 44.

74. Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics," section 3 Tsouni, 120.14.

75. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1242a22–b1.

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"intimates" (οἰκεῖοι) and fellow citizens as well as family members. Indeed, this solidarity is immediately afterwards explicitly broadened to encompass fellow members of large ethnic groups, and even all human beings.[76] Although solidarity with fellow citizens was still emphasized, local political interaction was no longer given quite so central a place in humans' essential nature.

Something close to this Peripatetic adaptation of Aristotle's "political animal" argument—to the effect that sustaining social bonds is essential to human nature—was also advanced in a later Hellenistic honorific decree of Priene in Ionia for the citizen Athenopolis. In its introduction, that decree claims that Athenopolis kept his promises to his fellow citizens, considering that "what characterizes him [literally, what belongs to him] most of all is his maintaining of assiduousness towards those conducting their lives together with him" (νομίζων το[ῦτο α]ὑτῶι μέγιστον ὑπάρχειν τὸ τὴν πρὸς τοὺς συνα̣ναστρ[ε]φ̣ο̣[μέν]ους ἐκτένειαν συντηρεῖν).[77] It is telling that, as in later Hellenistic Peripatetic thought, this quasi-Aristotelian attitude is expressed with the accent on social rather than political interaction: Athenopolis' solidarity is said to be directed towards "those conducting their lives together with him" (τοὺς συνα̣ναστρ[ε]φ̣ο̣[μέν]ους). In an interesting confirmation of the decree's overlap with Peripatetic terminology and thinking, the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (first/second century CE) used this same verb, συναναστρέφεσθαι, together with the adjectives found in the Peripatetic summary (κοινωνικός, "communal," and φιλάλληλος, "mutually loving"), to capture the theory of human natural sociability associated with the Peripatetics, which he rejected in favor of individual self-sufficiency.[78]

In the Prienian decree, as in that of Mylasa, the concept of συναναστροφή ("shared life") evokes a broad sense of social interdependence and intertwining lives, of the kind which might equally be found in any voluntary association for trade or cult. The verb συναναστρέφεσθαι was, as noted above, already used in later third-century BCE decrees of Delphi. In those cases, however, it referred to the interactions of a foreigner (granted proxeny in the decree) with Delphian citizens[79]: in other words, the loose interactions to be expected between those who were not fellow citizens or even residents of the same polis. It is striking that, in the later Hellenistic period, such loose sociability was expected at Priene and Mylasa even in relations between fellow citizens of the same polis.

Did Changing Ideas Reflect a Changing Civic Reality?

It is important to ask whether these changes in language and ideas in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, especially from the mid-second century BCE onwards, represented a response to changes in civic life in practice. From one perspective,

76. Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics," section 3 Tsouni, 120.9–20.

77. *I.Priene*² 63, ll. 17–21.

78. Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.13.5–6 (ἀπὸ τοῦ φύσει κοινωνικοῦ εἶναι καὶ φιλαλλήλου καὶ ἡδέως συναναστρέφεσθαι ἀνθρώποις).

79. *SIG*³ 534, ll. 7–8; *SIG*³ 534B, l. 8; *FD* III 4 175, ll. 7–8.

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the new ways of talking about civic life could be seen as a novel means of conceptualizing old practices, a primarily ideological realignment which went together with a partial reduction in the suspicion of inequality and differentiation among citizens so prevalent in Classical Athenian ideology and philosophy. However, it is also possible to point to changing practices on the ground, and to argue that these new conceptualizations both responded to and helped foster these shifts.

Several developments in civic life after c. 150 BCE were not easily reconciled with the traditional self-image of the polis, before then widespread in the Greek world, as a relatively closed body of citizens focused on their home community and its common good, who shared a single, unambiguous status of citizenship (*politeia*) and governed themselves in accordance with a constitution (also *politeia*). As some aspects of power passed upwards to the Roman administration, the traditional practices of egalitarian interaction among citizens, centered on political institutions which encouraged power-sharing and rigorous scrutiny of decisions, lost some of their dominance of civic life. This was partly the result of the increased prominence of another, also longstanding dimension of civic life, focused on mainly voluntary forms of social, cultural, and religious interaction rather than an obligatory dynamic of "ruling and being ruled."[80]

Citizens (and others) could engage in these alternative forms of interaction within centralized civic contexts, especially markets and festivals and the educational program of the gymnasium, though those all also had more formal and official dimensions, supervised by civic magistrates. These interactions were, however, perhaps most concentrated within more specialized educational groupings and voluntary associations, which could be based on conviviality, a particular religious cult (including early Christianity), or the pursuit of shared economic or professional interests.[81] As observed above, such associations had always been a key part of polis society. Nonetheless, the number of surviving inscriptions produced by them increases significantly in the Hellenistic and especially Roman periods.[82] This no doubt partly reflects changing epigraphic habits. However, recent research has strengthened the view that it also reveals associations' increased prominence in civic life, as a complement, straddling the public/private divide, to traditional public

80. For a recent overview, see Richard Alston, "Post-Politics and the Ancient Greek City," in *Political Culture in the Greek City after the Classical Age*, ed. Onno M. van Nijf and Richard Alston (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 307–36.

81. See Pierre Fröhlich and Patrice Hamon, eds., *Groupes et associations dans les cités grecques (IIIe siècle av. J.-C–IIe siècle ap. J.-C)* (Geneva/ Paris: Droz/EPHE, 2012). On associations in Athens, see Ilias N. Arnaoutoglou, *"Thusias heneka kai sunousias": Private Religious Associations in Hellenistic Athens* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2003); Ismard, *La cité des réseaux*, chapter 5. For Rhodes, see Thomsen, *The Politics of Association*.

82. For the rich epigraphic evidence, see John S. Kloppenborg and Richard S. Ascough, eds., *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, vol. 1, *Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); Philip A Harland, ed., *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations and Commentary*, vol. 2, *North Coast of the Black Sea, Asia Minor* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); as well as the Copenhagen *Inventory of Ancient Associations Database*, https://ancientassociations.ku.dk/CAPI/.

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civic institutions. As one study of Phrygia in Asia Minor has shown, associations' rising importance was partly due to Roman influence, including the model of local groups of Romans in Greek cities, which played a semi-public role as well as serving the business interests and sociability of this particular constituency.[83]

All these increasingly prominent forms and contexts of interaction were important mediators of civic power and trust,[84] but they were less directly and unremittingly focused on the political values of the common good, justice, and collective autonomy (though those values remained paramount in other situations). Instead, they gave more scope to individual self-interest, as well as to solidarity based on charity, hospitality, or social status. To put this broad argument in spatial terms, the civic assembly and council, the centers of political debate and collective deliberation, ceded some of their prominence in civic life to the commercial agora, civic temples, gymnasium, schools, the places where associations met and worshipped, and citizens' houses.

It should be stressed that this change was a matter of degree: voluntary sociocultural, educational, and religious interaction had been important earlier, and narrowly political interaction remained crucial into the Roman period. It is obviously difficult to demonstrate or prove a subtle shift in emphasis, but some concrete signs can be mentioned. As in Heraclides Creticus' third-century BCE travel narrative, the festivals, entertainment, and opportunities for education and socializing a Greek city could offer, rather than its constitution or laws, often became the main attraction and talking point for outsiders—not only for Romans keen to emphasize that they savored the intellectual companionship of Greek civic elites,[85] but also for mobile Greeks themselves.[86] Strabo, in his account of the great Greek cities of the eastern Roman Empire, frequently foregrounded the cultural and intellectual figures they had produced.[87] Even the self-image of polis insiders was changing in the same direction. Plutarch, an active local citizen in his home polis in central Greece, gave a disparaging account of orators who continued to engage in demagoguery by evoking Marathon and Classical military feats; in the first and second centuries CE, the really relevant *exempla* from Classical Athens were those showing gentle civility and generous forgetting of political rivalries or interests, or of strict justice, out of consideration for others, such as the amnesty of 403 BCE.[88] A similar inflection is also visible within official civic rhetoric itself. From the later Hellenistic period, cities'

83. See Benedikt Eckhardt, "Romanization and Isomorphic Change in Phrygia: The Case of Private Associations," *Journal of Roman Studies* 106 (2016): 147–71.
84. Compare Thomsen, *The Politics of Association*, chapter 7.
85. See, for example, Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.85–89, with Elizabeth Rawson, "Cicero and the Areopagus," *Athenaeum* 63 (1985): 44–67, especially pp. 53–54.
86. See *SEG* 39.1243 (Colophon, later second century BCE, decree for the citizen Polemaios), col. 5, ll. 1–11; and col. 1, 22–36. Cf. *Acts of the Apostles* 17:17–22.
87. For example, Strabo, *Geography* 14.5.12–15 (on the city of Tarsus); more generally, see Johannes Engels, "Ἄνδρες ἔνδοξοι or 'Men of High Reputation' in Strabo's *Geography*," in *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of a* Koloussourgia, ed. Daniela Dueck, Hugh Lindsay, and Sarah Pothecary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 129–43.
88. Plutarch, *Precepts of Statecraft* 814a–c.

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honorific decrees in praise of benefactors often foregrounded their hospitality and other voluntary contributions, especially to education and festivals, partly at the expense of their more utilitarian involvement in war, diplomacy, and public finance, though those traditional civic contributions also remained prominent.[89]

The broad shifts discussed here expanded the opportunities for non-citizens, including even resident foreigners and visitors, to play a central role in civic life, however temporary. This was an expansion of earlier Hellenistic trends towards more meaningful interaction between those who were not fellow citizens of the same polis, especially in the context of *sympoliteiai* and federal systems,[90] as well as voluntary associations, which increasingly enabled mingling between citizens and foreigners. Moreover, from the later Hellenistic period, it became quite common for some individuals to hold multiple polis citizenships in different places.[91] Even the status of polis citizenship (*politeia*) could increasingly be parceled, in specific cases, into separate entitlements, which made it possible to confer something like partial citizenship on outsiders.[92]

On the basis of the evidence surveyed in this section, it is a reasonable hypothesis that the new conceptualizations of social life within the polis discussed here were provoked partly by the shifting location of power from the mid-second century BCE onwards, but especially by the increased prominence of interactions which did not easily fit traditional conceptions of either political or private life. This would mirror how, in the modern world, the challenge of grappling with new forms of interaction has likewise stimulated intense reflection about, and reconceptualization of, the political and the social.[93] In both cases, the public sphere of political debate proved robust enough to subject new forms of interaction to intense scrutiny.

Reasserting Political Life in its Breadth and Variety

In the most pessimistic interpretation, the practical and ideological changes discussed so far amounted to "depoliticization" after c. 150 BCE, or even "post-politics."[94] According to advocates of this declinist approach, the new style of civic life, often

89. Contrast, for example, *I.Priene*² 68–70 (first century BCE) with earlier Hellenistic decrees of Priene, such as *I.Priene*² 20–28. For some of the changes discussed here, see Giovanni Salmeri, "Reconstructing the Political Life and Culture of the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire," in van Nijf and Alston, *Political Culture in the Greek City*, 197–214, here pp. 206–207.
90. See also Mackil, *Creating a Common Polity*.
91. Anna Heller and Anne-Valérie Pont, eds., *Patrie d'origine et patries électives : les citoyennetés multiples dans le monde grec d'époque romaine* (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2012).
92. Christel Müller, "(De)constructing *Politeia*: Reflections on Citizenship and the Bestowal of Privileges upon Foreigners in Hellenistic Democracies," in Azoulay, "Politics in Ancient Greece," 533–54.
93. See Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Engin F. Isin, ed., *Recasting the Social in Citizenship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
94. See Alston, "Post-Politics and the Ancient Greek City"; Robin Osborne, *Greek History: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2014), 139: "the city had been reduced to a mere town."

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more informal, cultural, and cosmopolitan, gave members of wealthy civic elites new opportunities to exercise power and patronage through avenues, such as offering lavish hospitality for all citizens in their homes, which lay outside traditional civic checks and balances, geared towards equality and justice. Instead of scrutiny and praise according to criteria identical for all citizens, wealthy benefactors received extravagant city honors, couched in ever-more abstract ethical praise for their generosity.[95] This interpretation of later Hellenistic developments shares many similarities with Arendt's picture of the conquest of the political by the social in the modern world: that is, the displacement of free collective action by citizens, aimed at the common good, in favor of more instrumental and individualistic forms of interaction, aimed at mere survival.[96] More recent theorists have developed Arendt's critique of modernity, positing the supersession of free, agonistic political debate about the common good by an ethics of charitable philanthropy, or "politics in the register of morality."[97]

Yet, as current research continues to uncover the power dynamics of the Greek cities in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it suggests a much more mixed and complex picture than this pessimistic reading: the changes outlined above were entwined in subtle ways with a robust political framework of enduring power-sharing and equality, and even democracy and political conflict.[98] This calls into question any straightforward developmental picture, and raises fresh questions

95. See in particular Gauthier, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs*, 56–59. See also Friedemann Quaß, *Die Honoratiorenschicht in den Städten des griechischen Ostens* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993), dating the changes earlier in the Hellenistic period than Gauthier.
96. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 38–49.
97. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 72–76, here p. 72. For an overview, see Japhy Wilson and Erik Swyngedouw, eds., *The Post-Political and Its Discontents: Spaces of Depoliticisation, Spectres of Radical Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).
98. For this complex, mixed picture, see, for example, Riet van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation: Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1996); Fröhlich and Müller, *Citoyenneté et participation*; Arjan Zuiderhoek, "On the Political Sociology of the Imperial Greek City," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 48 (2008): 417–45; Anna Heller, "La cité grecque d'époque impériale : vers une société d'ordres ?" *Annales HSS* 64, no. 2 (2009): 341–73, and, more recently, Heller, *L'âge d'or des bienfaiteurs. Titres honorifiques et sociétés civiques dans l'Asie Mineure d'époque romaine (Ier s. av. J.-C.–IIIe s. apr. J.-C.)* (Geneva: Droz, 2020); Cédric Brélaz, "La vie démocratique dans les cités grecques à l'époque impériale romaine. Notes de lectures et orientations de la recherche (note critique)," *Topoi* 18, no. 2 (2013): 367–99; Henri-Louis Fernoux, *Le dēmos et la cité. Communautés et assemblées populaires en Asie Mineure à l'époque impériale* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011); Salmeri, "Reconstructing the Political Life"; Christian Mann and Peter Scholz, eds., *"Demokratie" im Hellenismus. Von der Herrschaft des Volkes zur Herrschaft der Honoratioren?* (Mainz: Antike, 2012); John Ma, *Statues and Cities: Honorific Portraits and Civic Identity in the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially part 1; also Ma's earlier "Public Speech and Community in the *Euboicus*," in *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters and Philosophy*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 108–24; Müller, "(De)constructing *Politeia*."

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about the balance of political life and other spheres. Crucially, later Hellenistic and early Imperial-era Greeks were already themselves engaged in reflections similar to those of modern historians of the Hellenistic and Roman poleis, asking what place was left for politics and *politeia* in the changed world in which they lived. Although some accepted or embraced the partial displacement of politics by social life, others found creative ways to reassert the role of truly political life in their cities, and to navigate its interaction with the burgeoning social sphere. This is the subject of the rest of this paper; in the final section below, ancient reflections on these issues will be brought back to bear on the modern scholarly debate.

Among those who insisted on the persistence of politics, some simply preserved old ways of thinking, including the straightforward public/private dichotomy, which remained very widespread in both inscriptions and literary texts. For example, Hierocles, a Greek Stoic of the second century CE, sought to describe in systematic terms the concentric circles of people with which an individual should gradually recognize his or her affinity by a process of *oikeiōsis* ("appropriation" or "familiarization"), ending with the whole of humanity. In his list, Hierocles skipped straight from the private circles of the self and different degrees of kin to the public, institutionalized circles of fellow members of the same deme or *phylē* (two formal subdivisions of a polis), and then to members of the same polis. This left no space for an intermediate circle of informal social and economic relationships between the family and the civic sphere.[99]

Meanwhile, other Greek citizens and thinkers of the later Hellenistic and early Roman periods did make changes to the old framework, but in ways that enabled them to accommodate the new force of social life without exiling politics from the city. One tendency developed the attempts of Plato, Xenophon, and Isocrates to expand the notion of *politeia*, giving an ever more prominent place to extra-institutional interactions and customs, with the result that it resembled the modern idea of *le politique* (the political). Scholars have tended to see this inclusive approach as the dominant one in the Hellenistic world,[100] preparing the way for more metaphorical conceptions of *politeia* in the Roman Empire and Late Antiquity, when the term could denote the structure of the world, the cosmos, or a monastic community, or even the general "culture" or "life" of a holy man depicted in hagiography.[101] Already in the first century BCE, the related term *politikos*, moving away from its original sense of "political," could be used to express a very general sense of civilization or civility.[102]

99. See the account of Hierocles' views in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 4.671, ll. 16–21, with Anthony A. Long, "Hierocles on *Oikeiōsis* and Self-Perception," in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250–63.
100. For example, Azoulay, "Isocrate, Xénophon ou le politique transfiguré," 151 and 153.
101. Claudia Rapp, "City and Citizenship as Christian Concepts of Community in Late Antiquity," in *The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World: Changing Contexts of Power and Identity*, ed. Claudia Rapp and Harold A. Drake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 153–66.
102. For example, Strabo, *Geography* 3.2.15; 7.4.6; 14.3.2; and 17.1.3.

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It is not easy to find explicit endorsements of this very broad conception of *politeia* in inscribed decrees. It was, however, at least implicit in many later Hellenistic examples, which, as noted above, gave increasing prominence—and thus political scrutiny—to benefactors' civic life beyond formal institutions, including their family relations and broader sociability.[103] Indeed, some decrees which explicitly described benefactors as engaging in political life (πολιτευόμενος) focused strongly on their cultural contributions, especially to the gymnasium.[104] A broad, multifaceted conception of *politeia* can also be detected in decrees that use concise formulae to portray a citizen "engaging in political life *in every way*" (πάντα τρόπον πολιτευόμενος)[105] or "in all other respects" (ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν).[106]

This broader conception was also expressed more systematically in literary texts, especially of the Imperial period. Plutarch invokes it in his *On Whether an Old Man Should Participate in Politics*, stating that *politeia* is not a limited period of office but a lifelong political engagement. His broad conception of political life here ranges very widely across the collective activities of the community, but also across the full range of virtues: the true political agent must exercise not only the obviously political virtues, such as love of the polis, but also show himself to be community-minded (κοινωνικός) and humane (φιλάνθρωπος)—virtues well-suited to more informal, social interactions with a wide spectrum of people.[107] Plutarch's incorporation of humanity (φιλανθρωπία) into the heart of political virtue may partly take its cue from Xenophon and Isocrates, but he resists their urge to use the term, combined with a broad, loose view of *politeia*, to blur the boundaries between civic leadership and monarchical or aristocratic paternalism[108]: for Plutarch here, φιλανθρωπία remains within the bounds of the civic, which it also serves to reinforce. True political activity, which must emulate Socrates as much as Pericles, strives to recolonize the social sphere for the political ends of justice and the common good.

Plutarch had an obvious interest in this particular work in emphasizing the extra-institutional aspects of politics: these were the avenues open for old men to contribute to political life outside regular magistracies, now held by younger compatriots. However, his approach here chimes with hints elsewhere in his oeuvre.[109] This way of thinking also finds occasional explicit parallels in inscribed decrees of the Imperial period. The strongest occurs in an honorific inscription set up by

103. For example, *SEG* 39.1243 (Colophon, late Hellenistic), col. 4, ll. 24–34.
104. For example, *SEG* 38.1396, later Hellenistic decree of Perge for Stasias, a gymnasiarch, said to be "engaging in politics in the finest way" (ἄριστα πολιτευόμενος, ll. 22–24 and 59–60).
105. *IG* XII 5.274 or 321 (Paros, Hellenistic); cf. *IG* IX 1.540 (Leukas, Imperial).
106. *I.Metropolis* 1, text B, ll. 27–28.
107. Plutarch, *On Whether an Old Man Should Participate in Politics* 791c and 796c–797a.
108. Azoulay, "Isocrate, Xénophon ou le politique transfiguré," 148–51.
109. Plutarch, *Precepts of Statecraft* 800d. By contrast, *On Monarchy, Democracy, and Oligarchy* (826c–e) presents a narrower, more institutional understanding of *politeia*, but Plutarch's authorship is doubtful: G. J. D. Aalders, "Plutarch or Pseudo-Plutarch? The Authorship of *De Unius in Re Publica Dominatione*," *Mnemosyne* 35, no. 1/2 (1982): 72–83.

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the inhabitants (*katoikountes*) of a Lydian settlement, who did not possess full polis status. According to this decree, the benefactor was honored on the grounds of being a good man and "engaging in political life in a decent and humane way in private towards each individual and in common towards all" (κα[ὶ ἰδίᾳ] πρὸς ἕνα ἕκαστον κα[ὶ κοιν]ῇ πρὸς πάντας πολε[ιτευ]όμενον ἐπε[ικ]ῶς κα[ὶ φιλ]ανθρώπως).[110] Elevation of extra-institutional interaction to the status of participation in *politeia* might have been particularly attractive to a sub-polis community like this, without the full range of civic institutions, but the members of such a settlement would also have had an interest in remaining faithful to the norms of wider civic rhetoric and thinking. Like Plutarch, this community coopted humanity (and decency) as political virtues, even when exercised in informal one-to-one interaction.

Politics and Social Life as Complementary Spheres

Crucially for the argument of this paper, the more inclusive conception of *politeia*, subsuming the social, itself had a significant rival, until now less studied. Other decrees reasserted a fairly narrow, institutionalized conception of *politeia*, closer to modern notions of *la politique* (politics). This is well attested, for example, in the epigraphy of the cities of the Hellenistic and Imperial Lycian League, in southwestern Asia Minor, where the participle πολιτευόμενος commonly refers to the narrow realm of institutions, whether it denotes possessing the legal status of citizenship or participating in formal political institutions.[111] Similarly, a mid-second-century BCE decree honoring Apollonios, a citizen of the Ionian polis of Metropolis, marks off political involvement as a distinct stage in his life, on which he embarked after completing his youthful education and travel: "returning from his stay abroad he progressed into a political career" (ἐκ τε τῆς ἀποδημίας παραγενόμενος προῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὸ πολιτεύεσθαι).[112] This use of the verb πολιτεύεσθαι must correspond to active involvement in institutionalized politics.

Significantly, a few decrees in this category innovatively combined this narrow understanding of *politeia* with a new, richer conceptualization of extra-institutional interactions, envisioning a social realm, with its own dynamics and norms, as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, politics. The number of relevant texts is small, but the contrast with standard forms of thinking and expression makes them stand out. A striking example is the late first- or second-century CE posthumous decree of Kaunos, in southwestern Asia Minor, for the citizen Agreophon. Despite

110. *TAM* V 1.166, ll. 6–9 (from the *katoikia* at Encekler in the territory of the polis of Saittai in Lydia, Imperial period).
111. For recent analyses of the debate about the use of this language in Lycia (both favoring the "citizenship" interpretation), see Christina Kokkinia, "Opramoas' Citizenships: The Lycian *Politeuomenos*-Formula," in Heller and Pont, *Patrie d'origine et patries électives*, 327–39; and Patrick J. Baker and Gaétan Thériault, "Xanthos et la Lycie à la basse époque hellénistique. Nouvelle inscription honorifique xanthienne," *Chiron* 48 (2018): 301–32, here pp. 306–307, plus their edition of the new inscription (p. 302), ll. 3–5, cf. ll. 20–21.
112. *I.Metropolis* 1, text B, ll. 10–12.

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his young age, Agreophon, who belonged to a distinguished family of magistrates, had already fulfilled many leading civic roles: *stephanēphoros*, gymnasiarch, agonothete, and liturgist, as well as *dekaprōtos* (one of the leading men of the polis, with corresponding financial obligations). His early death provoked widespread public mourning, and the decree grants him a public funeral and sums up the virtues of the young man's life:

> *He made his life a decent one committed to equality of honor, showing respect for his elders as fathers, behaving in an affectionate way and a way showing love of the fine towards people of all ages; [he was] just in his formal political activity (*δίκαιος ἐμ πολιτείᾳ*); and also a man of integrity with respect to public tasks with which he was entrusted; an aspirant to self-control; pious and affectionate towards his kin; inimitable towards his friends; decent and humane towards his slaves.*[113]

Politeia is here no all-encompassing category demanding the full range of virtues. Rather, it represents one dimension of Agreophon's wider life (βίος), presumably his formal office-holding and other participation in civic government,[114] a usage first documented in 1925 by Adolf Wilhelm.[115] In that sphere, Agreophon is said to have shown the appropriate virtue of justice (δικαιοσύνη), as well as the related virtue of integrity in discharging formal public duties or "trusts" (he was ἁγνὸς καὶ περὶ τὰς δημοσίας πίστεις). However, he is also presented as having engaged in a wide range of other types of interaction with his fellow citizens, social and familial rather than political. In each case he demonstrated the appropriate virtues, often more sentimental than those of justice or purity: he showed respect (αἰδώς) towards his elders; he was affectionate (φιλόστοργος) towards people of all age groups; he was pious (εὐσεβής) and affectionate (φιλόστοργος again) towards his relations; he was inimitable (ἀμείμητος) towards his friends; and, interestingly, he showed decency (ἐπιείκεια) and humanity (φιλανθρωπία), here clearly a hierarchical virtue, towards his slaves. Significantly, Agreophon's interactions beyond *politeia* were not limited to life within the household, but also included much less restricted relationships, not only with "friends," but also with elders and those of "every age" in general. In other words, his social relations ranged as, if not more, widely than his political ones, but they had a different nature.

This Kaunian decree thus expresses a sophisticated conception of civic life, in which different spheres of interaction and different virtues support one another, rather than fusing into an amorphous whole of generic *politeia*, as in Plutarch. In

113. *I.Kaunos* 30, first or early second century CE, ll. 15–18: ἐπεικῆ καὶ ἰσότειμον τὸν ἑαυτοῦ παρεῖχεν βίον αἰδούμενος μὲν τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ὡς πατέρας, φιλοστόργως δὲ καὶ φιλοκαλῶς προσφερόμενος πάσῃ ἡλικίᾳ, δίκαιος ἐμ πολιτείᾳ, ἁγνὸς καὶ περὶ τὰς δημοσίας πίστεις, ζηλωτὸς τῆς σωφροσύνης, εὐσεβὴς καὶ φιλόστοργος πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους, ἀμείμητος πρὸς τοὺς φίλους, ἐπεικὴς καὶ φιλάνθρωπος πρὸς τοὺς οἰκέτας.
114. See *IOSPE* I² 32, third century BCE, face B, l. 76: ἐν τοῖς τῆς πολιτείας χρόνοις.
115. Adolf Wilhelm, "Zum griechischen Wortschatz," *Glotta* 14, no. 1/2 (1925): 68–84, here pp. 78–82, with many examples.

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particular, the gentler virtues of family and social life balance the sterner, incorruptible virtues of formal political life. Interestingly, another Imperial-era honorary decree of Kaunos also juxtaposes these different virtues, though without dividing them up between different spheres of civic life. The second-century CE decree for Quintus Vedius Capito, son of Publius, inscribed on a large family monument erected by his son, concludes by praising him for "engaging in political life as a magistrate in a dignified, virtuous, just, and humane way, towards the whole people in a beneficial manner, and, in personal dealings with individuals, not giving ground for complaint" (καὶ ἄρχοντα πολειτευόμενον σεμνῶς καὶ ἐναρέτως καὶ δικαίως καὶ φιλανθρώπως τῷ τε παντὶ δήμῳ συνφερόντως καὶ τοῖς κατ' ἄνδρα vacat ἀπροσκόπως).[116] This latter decree is in some respects closer to Plutarch's approach, in that it integrates informal interactions and humane virtue under the overarching notion of political activity (πολειτευόμενον). At the same time, the addition of the word ἄρχοντα, meaning "as a magistrate," suggests a desire, as in the decree honoring Agreophon, to define a specific realm of institutionalized politics, which in this case can itself accommodate informal, humane interaction. It is, however, also conceivable that the word ἄρχοντα belongs with the previous part of the sentence, not quoted here; in that case, the final lines would be very close to Plutarch's sentiment, expressing a global conception of political engagement cutting across different activities and virtues.

A closer parallel to the Agreophon decree can be found in another posthumous decree, later Hellenistic or early Imperial, from Synnada in Phrygia. Honoring the deceased youth Philonides, it states that his grandfather had shown good faith and incorruptibility in office (τὴν ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖ[ς] πίστιν τε καὶ καθα[ριότητα]), combined with sincerity and humanity towards, not merely his own associates, but each and every citizen (τὴν πρὸς ἕνα καὶ ἕκαστον [τῶν] πολιτῶν γνησιότητά τε καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν).[117] These comprehensive but informal interactions with his fellow citizens once again evoke a social sphere between public and private. This desirable balance between robust political life and gentle, humane social life was also praised by the historian and rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BCE–first century CE). In his account of Rome's origins, Dionysius described how Herakles brought civilized interaction to the world, putting down tyrannies and overbearing cities and establishing "lawful monarchies, well-ordered political systems, and humane and sociable modes of life" (νομίμους βασιλείας καὶ σωφρονικὰ πολιτεύματα καὶ βίων ἔθη φιλάνθρωπα καὶ κοινοπαθῆ).[118]

Some decrees even used abstract vocabulary (comparable to Dionysius' βίων ἔθη, or "modes of life") explicitly to identify social life as a distinct sphere, alongside politics. A later Hellenistic decree of Priene for the citizen Moschion gives the following description in its opening lines:

116. *I.Kaunos* 139, IIIc, ll. 19–21.

117. Adolf Wilhelm, *Neue Beiträge zur griechischen Inschriftenkunde*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1911), 56–57, ll. 18–19; compare the Lydian *katoikia* decree discussed in the previous section.

118. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.41.1.

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> *having lived piously towards the gods, and in a manner pleasing to the gods towards his parents and those living together with him in close relations and intimacy (*τοὺ[ς συμ]β[ι]οῦντας ἐν οἰκ[ε]ιότητι καὶ χρήσ̣ει*) and towards the rest of the citizens, and having conducted himself justly and in a glory-loving way towards his country, and worthily of his ancestors' virtue and reputation; and having received evidence throughout his life confirming the favor of the gods and the good will of his fellow citizens (*[τ]ῶν [σ]υμπολιτευομένων*) and the residents for his deeds in conformity with the finest standard…*[119]

Towards the end of this extract, the Prienians insist on the still-vibrant political dimension of their civic community, describing themselves as (active) fellow citizens (οἱ συμπολιτευόμενοι, literally "those engaging in political life together"). It was a traditional, narrow, institutional conception of *politeia* which they had in mind: the "fellow citizens," together with "the residents" (οἱ κατοικοῦντες), had provided evidence of their appreciation for Moschion's good deeds, presumably earlier honorific decrees passed through a process of institutionalized decision-making. This political conceptualization contrasts strongly with the description of the civic community in the contemporary decree for Moschion's brother Athenopolis, discussed earlier in this article, as "those conducting their lives together" (οἱ συναναστρεφόμενοι). The different individuals who proposed the decrees honoring each of the brothers thus made distinct choices: in the Moschion decree it was the Prienians' nature as a self-governing community that was foregrounded, while the decree for Athenopolis presented them as an interdependent social group profiting from a benefactor's largesse. This confirms that there was no simple consensus at the local level; rival meaningful ideological options could exist within a single polis.

Crucially, however, rather than ignoring the extra-political dimension of the Prienians' community emphasized in the Athenopolis decree, or relegating it to the realm of the private (ἴδιον), the drafter of the Moschion decree identified sociable interaction outside politics as one of several different spheres of polis life. If the highly plausible restoration of this inscription is correct, the decree praises Moschion for acting rightly, or "in a manner pleasing to the gods" (ὁ[σ]ίως), towards his parents and "those living together with him in close relations and intimacy" (τοὺ[ς συμ]β[ι]οῦντας ἐν οἰκ[ε]ιότητι καὶ χρήσ̣ει), as well as towards the rest of the citizens. The probable reference to συμβιοῦντες, "those living together with him," acknowledges that Moschion engaged in collective interactions and relations of interdependence outside politics (compare Athenopolis' συναναστρεφόμενοι, or "those conducting their lives together with him"). These would have included his interactions with other kin besides his parents (perhaps the main implication

119. *I.Priene*² 64, ll. 16–23: βεβιωκὼς εὐσ[εβῶς μὲ]ν πρὸς θεούς, ὁ[σ]ίως δὲ πρὸς τοὺς γονεῖς καὶ τοὺ[ς συμ]β[ι]οῦντας ἐν οἰκ[ε]ιότητι καὶ χρήσ̣ει κ̣α̣ὶ τοὺς λοιπο̣[ὺς] πολίτας πάντας, δικαίως δὲ καὶ φιλοδόξως προσε[νην]εγμένος τῆι πατρίδι καὶ καταξίως τῆς τῶν πρ[ογόνων] ἀρετῆς τε καὶ δόξης, διαμαρ[τ]υρουμένην ἐσχηκ̣[ὼς διὰ παν]τὸς τοῦ βίου τὴν παρὰ τῶν θεῶν εὐμένεια[ν] κα̣[ὶ τὴν παρὰ] [τ]ῶν [σ]υμπολιτευομένων καὶ τῶν κατοικού̣[ντων εὔνοια]ν ἐπὶ τοῖς κατὰ τὸ κάλλιστον πρασσο̣[μένοις…].

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of οἰκ[ε]ιότητιτι), but also with non-relations with whom he enjoyed special bonds (probably the main implication of χρήσ̣ει). The latter may have included fellow members of voluntary associations, which in other contexts could themselves be described as *symbiōseis* ("communities of shared life") or *koina* ("public things").[120]

These relationships of συμβίωσις ("living together") were depicted in this decree as the second of three concentric circles of relationships lacking a narrowly political, institutionalized dimension: the inner circle comprised Moschion's relations with his parents and the outer one his extra-political relations with "the rest of the citizens." This analysis in terms of concentric spheres extending out from each individual was also a feature of contemporary late Hellenistic Stoic and Peripatetic attempts to grapple with the complexity of informal interpersonal relationships.[121] As in the decrees from Kaunos and Synnada considered above, the different dimensions of Moschion's civic activity required distinct, calibrated virtues. As well as piety towards the gods, he exercised different virtues in social relations with family, associates, and fellow citizens, on the one hand, and in formal political interaction, on the other. He acted "rightly" or "in a manner pleasing to the gods" (ὁσίως) in social relations, but relations with his country (πατρίς), and thus with fellow citizens specifically in their political capacity, demanded the more directly political virtues of justice (δικαιοσύνη) and love of glory (φιλοδοξία).

There is an interesting overlap here with the ideas and phrasing of the near-contemporary Epicurean Philodemus (first century BCE). In his defense of Epicurus against charges of subversive atheism, Philodemus claims that the latter had not been condemned by the Athenians for his doctrines and activities, as was notoriously the case with other philosophers. On the contrary, he knew how to defend himself, "together with those who truly shared his life" (ἅμα τοῖς γνη[σί]ως συνβιώσασι[ν α]ὐτῶι), presumably fellow members of the Epicurean Garden. The very fact that Epicurus was relatively unknown in Athens showed that he, like his "fellow school members" ([τ]οὺς συνσχολ̣[άζ]οντας [αὐτῶ]ι), was not considered harmful to his fellow citizens (τῶν συνπολε[ι]τ̣[ευ]ομένων).[122] As in the Moschion decree, there is an implicit contrast between Epicurus' warm relations with those "sharing [his] life" and more impersonal relations with the polis as a political community. Philodemus' distinction between political life and the life of a community for shared education also chimes with an earlier decree from Asia Minor (early second century BCE), in which the young men (*neoi*) of Xanthos in Lycia distinguished between their gymnasiarch's contributions to the gymnasium and his activities in the political sphere (ἐν τῶι πολιτεύματι).[123]

120. For example, Harland, *Greco-Roman Associations*, 195.
121. See Cicero, *On Duties* 1.50–58; Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics," section 3 Tsouni, 120.9–122.9; section 9 Tsouni, 127.4–9; compare also the later ideas of Hierocles the Stoic, discussed above.
122. Philodemus, *On Piety* 1, ll. 1505–56.
123. *SEG* 46.1721, ll. 5–21, with Philippe Gauthier, "Bienfaiteurs du gymnase au Létôon de Xanthos," *Revue des études grecques* 109, no. 1 (1996): 1–34. On groups of *neoi* as both

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One final, later example is interesting to study in detail. A long posthumous Imperial-era decree from Olbia on the north coast of the Black Sea, honoring the citizen Karzoazos, explores in depth the relationship between political engagement and wider life (βίος), which can be fused into συμβίωσις ("living together").[124] In the introduction to the decree, the Olbiopolitans praise Karzoazos as "a man who has followed finely the path of political engagement and aspired to an unimpeachable life" (ἄνδρα καλῶς ἐπιβεβηκότα τοῖς τῆς πολειτείας ἴχνεσι καὶ ζηλώσαντα βίον ἀλοιδόρητον, ll. 3–5). The precise components of both his political engagement (πολειτεία) and his irreproachable life (βίος ἀλοιδόρητος) are spelled out in the substance of the decree. He responded as an enthusiastic, willing liturgist to civic crises. Whenever his country (*patris*) called on him, he became an example to the young, "imitating the life of those who engage in politics excellently" (μειμούμενο[ς] τῶν ἄριστα πολειτευομένων τὸν βίον, ll. 12–14). This is followed immediately by an account of his formal political activities as magistrate and ambassador. Significantly, he is said to have shown the specific, appropriate political virtues of energy and reliability in service, behaving "with good faith," "strenuously," and "unhesitatingly" (πιστῶς, πονικῶς, ἀόκνως, l. 15).

The decree then turns to the other dimension of Karzoazos' activities appropriate for civic scrutiny, his interactions with every single individual (ἐν ταῖς πρὸς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑπαντήσεσι, ll. 19–20). In a standard decree these would be summed up as his "private" or "individual" (ἰδίαι) relations, as if to dispel any suspicion of parapolitical collective activities that might shade into factionalism. Here, however, there is no mention of the "private" (ἴδιον); what is stressed is the broad reach and collective character of Karzoazos' interactions beyond formal politics. He showed "humanity" (φιλανθρωπία) and "love of foreigners" (φιλοξενία) towards outsiders, reflecting a spirit of kinship (συνγενικὸν πάθος, ll. 21–23). Towards individual citizens in need he showed the traditional civic solidarity expressed by "good will" (εὔνοια), more fraternal than the slightly diffuse "humanity" suitable for foreigners. The precise phrasing here is particularly significant for my argument: he showed good will "if any of his fellow citizens mixed with him either on the pretext of business or through the shared habit of mutual association" (πολειτῶν δὲ εἴ τις αὐτῷ συνέμειξεν ἢ κατὰ συναλλαγῆς ἀφορμὴν ἢ κατὰ συμβιώσεως συνήθειαν, ll. 23–25). The later Hellenistic coinage συμβίωσις, to refer to social relations, again stands out. The concatenation of four compounds with συν- (the prefix indicating joint action) emphasizes that these informal interactions constituted no atomistic, individualistic realm, but a genuinely social one.

inside and outside the polis and its politics, see Riet van Bremen, "*Neoi* in Hellenistic Cities: Age Class, Institution, Association?" in Fröhlich and Hamon, *Groupes et associations*, 31–59.

124. *IOSPE* I² 39. See Angelos Chaniotis, "Political Culture in the Cities of the Northern Black Sea Region in the 'Long Hellenistic Age' (The Epigraphic Evidence)," in *The Northern Black Sea in Antiquity: Networks, Connectivity, and Cultural Interactions*, ed. Valeriya Kozlovskaya (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 141–66.

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Oligarchy or More Complex Self-Understanding?

In order to explain these distinctive decrees' sharp division between *politeia* and social life, the most economical account might seem to be a shift towards oligarchy. In this reading, the implication would be that by this period significant decision-making, especially interaction with the Roman authorities, lay mainly with those, the recipients of honorific decrees, who qualified for the burden and opportunity of expensive embassies, magistracies, and liturgies. While they engaged in *politeia*, ordinary citizens and other city residents were left, as in the Mylasan decree for Ouliades, with the more everyday world of social interaction and sociability: συναναστροφή or συμβίωσις. The later Hellenistic decree of Colophon in Ionia for Polemaios even explicitly states that his leadership of an embassy allowed the rest of the citizens to focus, unburdened, on their "private affairs" (ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδίων).[125] This general approach might also seem to have released the often unequal day-to-day relations of the agora or associations from political scrutiny and projects of redistribution; as part of the "social," they now lay outside politics.

The "oligarchy" hypothesis cannot, however, fully account for the division made by some decrees between *politeia* and social life: in most cities, ordinary citizens, outside the liturgical elite, could still participate in formal, institutionalized politics, especially in the assembly. This was already evident in the reference to the confirmed approbation of Moschion's "fellow active citizens" (συμπολιτευόμενοι) at Priene. The late Hellenistic endurance of assembly politics[126] was sustained into the Imperial period: the vibrancy of the Imperial-era poleis' assembly life, especially in Asia Minor, has been demonstrated by recent studies which show the political *ekklēsia* (assembly) as a living model and foil for the Christian *ekklēsia* (church).[127]

Since participation in political institutions did remain open to many citizens, the division between narrow *politeia* and social life must have been often less about marking off politics as an elite prerogative than about defining two structural dimensions of civic life which divided *any* citizen's civic engagement in two. This is also the impression created by the most systematic, abstract reflections on this theme by contemporary intellectuals. Strabo sometimes draws on this conceptual scheme when analyzing the collective life of the different communities and ethnic groups he surveys in his *Geography*. He argues in separate passages that education in certain types of edifying myth and communal dining at specified times (something he finds missing in Indian culture), strengthen "both social and political life" (τὸ κοινωνικὸν καὶ τὸ πολιτικὸν τοῦ βίου σχῆμα or τὸν κοινωνικὸν καὶ τὸν πολιτικὸν βίον).[128] He

125. *SEG* 39.1243, col. 2, ll. 3–31, here ll. 16–18.

126. On the complex mixture of wide participation, citizen initiative and elite dominance in the later Hellenistic poleis, see Fröhlich and Müller, *Citoyenneté et participation*.

127. Especially Fernoux, *Le dēmos et la cité*; cf. Heller, "La cité grecque d'époque impériale."

128. Strabo, *Geography* 1.2.8 and 15.1.53.

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thus held that collective education and commensality, both aimed at the broad population, could help to forge a collective life (βίος) for all, with two parts worth distinguishing under different names: κοινωνικός (which here, because it is used to define a sphere of communal life, can be translated as "social" in the sense that I am proposing in this article) and πολιτικός ("political").

Strabo certainly did have his own conception of political action and thought, as the realm of power and rule, centered on "the needs of rulers" and clearly distinct from more general social relations.[129] His conception of politics, which I plan to study in more detail elsewhere, is perhaps the closest equivalent in the Hellenistic or Roman-era Greek world to the reaction of theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Jean-Luc Nancy to modern, more consensual notions of *le politique* (the political). Inspired partly by Carl Schmitt, they, like Strabo, insist that political life, to be truly worthy of the name, must be distinguished by agonistic assertion of power.[130] This separate evidence for Strabo's narrow understanding of truly political life shows that he was not using the terms κοινωνικός and πολιτικός as near synonyms in the discussions of education and commensality cited above, but as part of a fine-grained vision of civic life.

The author of the summary of Peripatetic ethics recorded in Stobaeus discussed above brings further theoretical elaboration to the division. He claims that people desire material and bodily goods (that is, beneficial things deriving from the outside world or the body) partly because they are beneficial "for both the political and the social life, and also for the theoretical life" of an individual (πρός τε τὸν πολιτικὸν καὶ τὸν κοινωνικὸν βίον καὶ δὴ καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεωρητικόν), for life is measured in political, social, and theoretical actions (ταῖς πολιτικαῖς καὶ ταῖς κοινωνικαῖς πράξεσι καὶ ταῖς θεωρητικαῖς). Virtue is not self-regarding, but social and political (ἀλλὰ κοινωνικὴν καὶ πολιτικήν).[131] The concluding chapters of the summary, which cover specifically political questions and are based on Aristotle's *Politics*, make clear that in this case too the author understood politics as a circumscribed realm, open to all citizens. The "social" here should once again be seen as a complement to, rather than a near synonym of, the "political."[132]

It is important to emphasize that the later Hellenistic Peripatetics were here revising Aristotle's views. As noted above, Aristotle insisted that the many "communities" of a polis, with their particular aims, were subordinate to the overarching "political community," with its focus on the good life in the round. The passages quoted here suggest that, by contrast, his successors elevated the world of sociability

129. Strabo, *Geography* 1.1.18; cf. 16.2.38.
130. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désœuvrée* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990); Mouffe, *On the Political*. For an analysis, see Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, chapter 3.
131. Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics," section 7 Tsouni, 125.10–23. As in the case of the Strabo passages cited above, it is justifiable here to translate the term κοινωνικός as "social" in the sense proposed in this article, because it is used to describe a sphere of communal life.
132. Annas, "Aristotelian Political Theory," 87 (cf. p 82) does, however, see a strong convergence in meaning between the two terms.

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and associations to an independent realm, worthy of its own place in the foundations of their ethical theory: they retained Aristotle's fundamental categories of the political and theoretical lives of an individual, but added the social (κοινωνικός) life as a third, equally essential category.[133]

The later Hellenistic Peripatetics doubtless rethought the categories of human life partly in order to take into account Hellenistic associations' increasingly cosmopolitan nature, cutting across traditional citizen-outsider divisions; burgeoning κοινωνίαι ("associations") were less clearly subordinate to the polis of citizens as a single overarching κοινωνία than in Aristotle's day.[134] Interestingly, the word κοινωνικός already had a close connection with formal voluntary associations in fourth-century BCE Athenian texts, including Aristotle's corpus.[135]

At the same time, the Peripatetics who addressed these topics were also in dialogue with their contemporary rivals, the Stoics. In his *On Duties*, probably drawing heavily on the late Hellenistic Stoic Panaetius, Cicero lists among the things shared by fellow citizens, not only physical infrastructure and legal and political entitlements and institutions, but also what sounds like a social sphere: "habitual bonds and ties of sociability and business and dealings contracted by many with many" (*consuetudines praeterea et familiaritates multisque cum multis res rationesque contractae*).[136]

The Shifting Boundaries of the Social and Political

Some Greek citizens and thinkers thus found imaginative ways in the later Hellenistic and early Roman eras to resist the tendencies studied in the first half of this paper, by insisting on the persistence of local politics, while also harnessing the newly prominent social sphere. One approach to these philosophical and ideological questions—and the strategy so far emphasized in modern scholarship—was to develop attempts made in the fourth century BCE to expand *politeia* to incorporate, and tame, the social sphere. The resulting broad conception of *politeia* was an effective response to a quandary faced by many Roman poleis: how to compensate with new areas of political engagement for those now ceded to higher authorities, or made otiose by the spread of peace.

The other approach, experimented with more extensively in civic epigraphy, was to insist on a narrower conception of *politeia*.[137] This less-studied strategy also served particular needs of the Greek cities. The major shifts taking place in the

133. See, for example, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098a20–1098b8; Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics," section 7 Tsouni, 125.10–23.

134. For this evolution, see Annas, "Aristotelian Political Theory," 87.

135. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1161b12–15; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 52.2; cf. Demosthenes, *On the Symmories* 14.16. The word could also have a more generic meaning in Aristotle: *Politics* 1283a38.

136. Cicero, *On Duties* 1.53.

137. Compare Azoulay, "Isocrate, Xénophon ou le politique transfiguré," 135, n. 6, on the institutional conception of *politeia* in Classical decrees, though Classical inscriptions lacked much complementary exploration of the social.

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later Hellenistic and early Roman periods created new motivations for citizens of poleis such as Kaunos or Priene to draw a sharp distinction between *politeia* and social life. If outsiders had come to accuse these cities of losing political vitality, or citizens themselves harbored doubts, it would have been a bold response to define very clearly a circumscribed realm of institutionalized politics—of magistracies and embassies, but also council and assembly—that remained distinct and undiluted by the mass of more general social interaction.

This narrower conception of *politeia* was in some striking cases innovatively accompanied by a newly rich conceptualization of the third space of polis life, only roughly sketched in earlier periods: this was the world, with its own distinct dynamics and virtues, which was described with new or previously very rare terms for "shared life" (συναναστροφή, συμβίωσις), or new usages of terms such as κοινὸς βίος, τὸ κοινωνικόν, or κοινωνικὸς βίος. It is not always easy to tell exactly what activities these abstract terms were meant to denote in practice. They tended to pick out styles of collective interaction (gentle, informal, but still wide-ranging) and accompanying virtues more directly than specific activities. Nonetheless, they probably often referred to a mixture of longstanding practices which had recently gained greater prominence in civic life vis-à-vis traditional politics: practices such as voluntary commensality and religious worship, educational activities, commercial exchange, and informal conversations in the agora, which previously had to be classified as either public or private. Simultaneously, these terms also captured new forms of interaction, such as those connected with increasingly cosmopolitan associations or the expanded role of the gymnasium and philosophical or rhetorical schools. Individual, small-scale *symbiōseis* ("communities of shared life," or "associations") contributed to the composite *symbiōsis* of the whole polis.

The different ancient sociologies of the Hellenistic and Roman poleis studied here can help to develop modern scholarly debates about alleged "depoliticization." That certain contemporaries saw the social sphere as colonizing the traditional place of politics lends a degree of support to the depoliticization narrative. Yet the contrasting means of reasserting the place of local politics also suggest different ways to resist the charge of depoliticization. Most modern scholars who have insisted forcefully on the continued vitality of politics in the Hellenistic and Roman polis have done so by emphasizing continuities in institutions and practices with the Classical polis, at least before c. 150 BCE.[138] The much broader ancient approach to *politeia* would however support the opposite argument: the Hellenistic and Roman poleis had a very vibrant political life, not because they imitated Classical Athens, but precisely because they found new avenues for their own brand of politics, more cultured, thoughtful, and cosmopolitan. According to this view, it is necessary to move beyond old-fashioned conceptions of power and politics, which see 337 or 146 BCE as watersheds of

138. To take a few examples, consider Gauthier, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs*; John Ma, "Fighting Poleis of the Hellenistic World," in *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*, ed. Hans van Wees (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 337–76; Grieb, *Hellenistische Demokratie*.

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depoliticization because the Greek polis was supposedly emasculated by a loss of military clout. In their place must come a much more subtle understanding of political power and engagement.

This would in turn mean that the rise of peaceful culture, education (*paideia*), and voluntary associations at the core of Greek civic life did not snuff out politics. Rather, it created better conditions for all residents of Greek cities, including women and outsiders, to exercise more profound power and leadership. They could guide and encourage one another, through dialogue, towards the virtue, wisdom, and mutual understanding necessary for justice, solidarity, stability, and meaningful debate. These were goals in pursuit of which traditional war, along with formalized "love of honor" (*philotimia*) and competition for control of money and soldiers, had often been more distractions than aids. From this perspective, "Socratic citizenship" built on questioning, coaxing, dialogue, and encouragement, when practiced across all the complex interactions of Hellenistic and Roman-era polis life, as in Plutarch's ideal, represented a richer brand of political engagement than the patrolling of citizen exclusivity and constant military mobilization of the Classical polis.

If neither of the alternatives sketched so far—simply stressing or denying "depoliticization"—is entirely convincing in itself, the other ancient approach to the scope of political and social life discussed here, which sharply distinguished between them, suggests a possible middle way between the two extremes, also applicable to other societies in which traditional political activities and equalities appear to be marginalized. It may be more promising to seek to define and understand more precisely each of the varied, interlocking spheres and communities of Hellenistic and early Roman-era Greek civic life, and to investigate how politics in the strict sense related to predominantly social, economic, cultural, and religious interaction.[139]

Even if the polis was no longer the habitat of "political animals" focused predominantly on institutionalized political activity, narrowly defined politics was not necessarily always overshadowed or diluted by other spheres of communal life. Defended and practiced in the right way, formal politics could hold its own within the wider civic ecology as one among several indispensable ways of sustaining civic life. For example, it could play the role of asserting and protecting rigorous, impersonal standards of justice, incorruptibility, and public service. This was an indispensable counterweight to the social sphere's equally necessary norms of compassionate concern for individuals or prudential pursuit of individual self-interest; norms that could, if unchecked, threaten the cohesion of the polis. In the other direction, gentle social and cultural interaction, in festivals, agora, or the gymnasium, could smooth over still vibrant political rivalries and build civic harmony—creating a better foundation for strenuous, conflictual politics itself. Seen in this way, civic political life was not withering away in the Hellenistic and early Roman polis, on a long road towards being supplanted by religious structures in Late Antiquity. Rather, it was finding its particular niche, and the distinctive contribution it could

139. Compare, for ancient Greek history more generally, Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Unthinking the Greek* Polis*: Ancient Greek History beyond Eurocentrism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chapters 3 and 6; Ismard, *La cité des réseaux*, 405–11.

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make to complex city dynamics. Any effective model of the early Roman-era polis must give full weight both to enduring traditional politics (and conflict) and to new forms of civic interaction, but also to their complex interrelationship.

The ancient differentiation of politics and social life considered here also represents a little-studied chapter in the history of debates about *la politique* (politics), *le politique* (the political), and "the social." The Hellenistic and early Roman-era evidence shows that it was possible within the resources of the Greek language to imagine a social sphere, which tends to confirm that the Classical Athenians made a conscious choice to deny its existence, not least because they associated it with inequality or division. Hellenistic and Roman-era Greeks who moved away from the Athenian model, in theory and in practice, foreshadowed later ways of thinking, quite distinct but also overlapping in complex ways with these ancient ones.[140] These include ideas of a "social sphere" or "civil society" distinct from formal politics, usually thought to be an invention of the Enlightenment or Hegel.[141] They also include the influential line of thought, later articulated by Niccolò Machiavelli and Max Weber,[142] that gentle, sentimental virtues of kindness, compassion, or philanthropy can be counterproductive in political contexts; politics is its own *Beruf*, or "vocation," with specific skills and virtues, distinct from general morality.[143] By the same token, obsessive focus on political values of justice and the common good in all contexts may not be the best way to sustain peaceful, harmonious communities. Rather, the different styles of interaction must balance each other in a productive tension.

This article has sought to present a detailed example of how a Rosanvallon-style history of political ideas, drawing on the widest range of available evidence, from seemingly banal inscriptions to the most abstract political philosophy, can yield a revised picture of ancient political thinking and its links with modern debates. The influential modern picture of the Greek polis with which I started, championed by Arendt and others, relies on a few canonical authors and captures only part of the rich Greek civic tradition of reflection about political and private life, and the space between them. The evidence discussed in this article suggests that there was, in fact, a different, less dismissive Greek approach to that intermediate space, which gained new force and clarity from the later Hellenistic period onwards.

140. It is probably not a question of a genealogical link, although Cicero's *On Duties*, partly inspired by the debates of the later Hellenistic period (see above), may have exercised an influence on the evolution of the modern ideas.
141. Consider Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962], trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), and its influence.
142. See, for example, Dana Villa, "The Legacy of Max Weber in Weimar Political and Social Theory," in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 73–98, here p. 79.
143. See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" [1919], in *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004).

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It cannot be entirely coincidental that the application of a method close to Rosanvallon's yields a parallel result: in the same way as his incorporation of more pragmatic texts, such as legal submissions, and a wider range of thinkers, such as trade unionists, reveals greater openness than commonly assumed to the intermediate "third sphere" in modern France,[144] so too more attention to inscriptions and lesser-studied cities reveals more explicit ancient sensitivity to the ambiguous border zone between political and private life than the standard picture of the Greek polis allows. This basic parallel holds even though the differences between the two contexts are profound, and indeed just as revealing as their similarities: the ancient thinkers and citizens studied here never framed their exploration of this intermediate zone in terms of the promotion of liberty and democracy, for example.

I would not go so far as to posit an intrinsic connection between method and findings; indeed, applying the same approach to Classical Athens tends to confirm rather than undermine the standard picture. Nonetheless, Rosanvallon's proposed marriage of the "history of ideas" with "social history"[145] brings into relief the complexity and diversity of representations of interpersonal bonds, perhaps especially in societies—such as ancient Greece or post-1789 France—where political thinkers and agents were faced with the challenge of tailoring abstract, demanding ideals of citizenship to a complex, plural, and changing social reality. In both the ancient Greek and French contexts, one response to this challenge has been to reject dominant assumptions by declaring social life beyond politics to be a vital component of a flourishing polis, rather than its antithesis.

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144. See Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français*, especially chapter 5 (for example, p. 143) and chapter 10.

145. Ibid., 11–12.

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