INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

Politics and truth have always had a fraught relationship. In the *Republic*, Plato recommends that political elites knowingly propagate a “noble lie” to maintain social harmony. In “Truth and Politics,” Hannah Arendt observes that “from the viewpoint of politics, truth has a despotic character.” Her anxiety about truth is that it forecloses disagreement and deliberation, which is the very essence of political life. According to John Stuart Mill, deliberating in public about politics is good for a democracy because it affords citizens “the opportunity of exchanging error for truth” (1859: 21). But if politics is essentially a realm of contestation, then truth might not be an appropriate category for political discourse. Indeed, some have rejected the very idea of objective truths in politics. Whatever we think about truth’s role in politics, Arendt was certainly right that “no one ever doubted that truth and politics are on rather bad terms with each other.”

The first part of this handbook explores the vexed relationship between truth and politics from both historical and contemporary perspectives. In Chapter 1, Tamer Nawar considers the role of knowledge in Athenian democracy. As Nawar points out, ancient philosophers were often critical of the epistemic features of democratic institutions. He examines the principal institutions of Athenian democracy and also clarifies Plato’s epistemic argument against democracy. Nawar then examines Aristotle’s more optimistic view about democracy and knowledge, which is rooted in the epistemic power of groups. This lays the groundwork for much contemporary work in political epistemology (see, for example, the chapter by Hélène Landemore). Nawar concludes by examining what Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophers had to say about democracy and knowledge.

In Chapter 2, Chris Fraser argues that, according to ancient Chinese Mohists, social epistemology plays a crucial role for the legitimacy of political authority. In particular, the Mohists claim that political stability is achieved when the subjects of a state identify with the norms of judgment and conduct promulgated by its leaders. This doctrine of “identifying upwards” gives social epistemology a vital role in justifying the legitimacy of political authority because the norms that ground legitimacy are both moral and epistemic. Thus, political authority and epistemic authority are deeply intertwined on this conception of politics.

In Chapter 3, Anthony Booth explores the relationship between epistemology and politics in Islamic philosophy. He explains how medieval Islamic philosophers wrestled with the
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issue of the role and function of expertise in politics, which is a topic we are still grappling with today (see Part 7 of this handbook). Booth argues that medieval Islamic philosophers held an epistemological view that he calls “Islamic Moderate Evidentialism,” and Booth finds parallels of this idea in the mid-twentieth-century revolutionary Islamism of Sayyid Qutb and Abul A’la Maududi. Finally, Booth shows how understanding this movement from the perspective of medieval Islamic philosophy can shed light on other schools of political thought.

In Chapter 4, Paul Kelly gives an overview of Mill’s argument for liberalism and the conditions of acquiring knowledge. Mill believed that knowledge was ultimately based on inductions from experience that are always open to review and falsification, so the growth of knowledge would require freedom of speech and a rejection of censorship. In fact, Mill says we must not paternalistically attempt to spare people from error because that would undermine the epistemic basis for testing new beliefs and appreciating existing views. Thus, Mill defends the importance of error and unpopular opinion, as well as freedom from government limitation, because they serve an educative function in the broader process of democratic deliberation. However, Kelly points out that Mill’s domestic politics is far more progressive than his views about international politics, where Mill defends imperialism and is less tolerant of diversity or error.

In Chapter 5, Yasemin Sari reassesses Hannah Arendt’s view about the role of truth in politics. In particular, Sari examines the idea that people have a “right to unmanipulated factual information,” which Arendt says is crucial for establishing freedom of opinion. This chapter aims not only to demonstrate that factual truths play a key role in politics, but also to bring a new perspective to democratic theory by clarifying the relationship between factual truths and political judgment.

In Chapter 6, Simon Blackburn reflects on whether the very idea of political epistemology has doubtful application. While politics needs to be informed by knowledge from diverse fields, he claims there is no special, purely political element in its epistemology. Politics is more directly concerned with deciding what to do, and it is here that knowledge is a rare commodity, according to Blackburn. This is because we seldom know in advance which decisions are best, and we may not even know whether we could have done better with hindsight. This chapter ends by arguing that, contrary to what many writers have claimed, postmodern thought has little to do with the “post-truth” atmosphere.

In Chapter 7, the final chapter of this part, Amanda Greene tells a “tale of two tribes” with different political outlooks: the ‘heartlanders’, whose concern for truthfulness is anchored in personal and relational integrity, and the ‘metropolitans’, whose concern for truthfulness is anchored in impartiality and cosmopolitanism. According to Greene, each group exhibits qualities of truthfulness – sincerity and accuracy – in ways that the other group does not recognize. The result is that each group interprets the other group’s political participation as an abandonment of truth for the sake of power, thereby undermining political legitimacy. Greene builds on the work of Bernard Williams and John Stuart Mill to argue that finding common ground is necessary if truth is to play a role in the resistance of tyranny.
1 DEMOCRACY AND KNOWLEDGE IN ANCIENT GREECE

Tamer Nawar

1 Introduction
Ancient philosophers were often critical of the epistemic features of democratic institutions. I first offer a critical review of the principal institutions of Athenian democracy. I then clarify what I take to be Plato’s central argument against democracy, which turns upon its epistemic failings. I then examine Aristotle’s views about democracy and knowledge and his views concerning the epistemic powers of groups. Finally, I conclude by examining what Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophers had to say about democracy and knowledge.

2 Athenian democracy
There is evidence for egalitarianism, collective deliberation, and public discussion in various pre-modern societies (the kings of the Iliad engaged in some collective deliberation, e.g. Iliad 14.27ff, but there were risks for speakers of lesser status, 2.211ff). However, it seems that governing by the citizenry – dēmokratia, i.e. rule (kratos) by the people (dēmos) – originated in ancient Greece in the sixth Century BCE. Athens was not the only ancient Greek democracy in the classical period and – despite what is often claimed (even by eminent authorities) – it may not have been the first (for the evidence concerning archaic city-states, see Robinson 1997; Hansen and Nielsen 2004; for classical democracies other than Athens, cf. Robinson 2011). However, Athens is the best documented ancient democracy and – despite two brief oligarchic interruptions (in 411 and 404 BCE) – it was arguably the most successful on several measures (cf. Morris 2004; Ober 2015).

Ancient democracies, including that of Athens, were not liberal and are typically characterised as direct, participatory, or deliberative (as opposed to representative). In the fourth century (c. 340 BCE), Athens’ citizenship was made up of perhaps 30,000 or so adult males (the population was significantly larger; Attica probably had over 200,000 inhabitants). Women, foreigners, and slaves were not full citizens and had no direct access to political participation but there was some diversity in terms of wealth and occupation among the (adult male) citizenry and all full citizens had isonomía (equality before the law) and iségoria (equal right to public speech). The principal offices and institutions of Athenian democracy included the following:
• The ἐκκλησία (assembly): was responsible for passing decrees (but not laws) in domestic and foreign matters, electing magistrates, and several others matters. Meetings, which were open to all citizens and held 40 times a year, were usually attended by over 6,000 citizens. Votes were often made by show of hands.
• The δικασταί (judors): 6,000 citizens (over the age of 30), who served for one year and were selected by lot from those who applied. From this pool, νομοθέται (legislators) and juries for the δικαστεία (popular courts) were drawn.
  • Legislators (1,000+ jurors): passed laws. They met infrequently.
  • Popular courts (200+ jurors in private cases, 500+ in public cases; in some cases very much more than 500): passed judgement on court cases (which rarely lasted more than a few hours). They met very frequently.
• The βουλή (council): 500 citizens (over the age of 30), who served for one year and could only serve twice in their lifetimes. They were chosen by lot from those who applied. They drafted agendas and proposals for the assembly. They met very frequently.

While there has been some disagreement among historians over the precise nature and function of these institutions, it is worth emphasising at least three facts.

First, voting was sometimes done by ballot and sometimes by show of hands but the manner in which votes were counted was often not straightforward (at least by modern lights, cf. Schwartzberg 2010). Despite some famous exceptions, such as the trial of Socrates (where the votes were split fairly closely), something like consensus may have been the norm.

Second, the popular courts were fairly ‘political’ institutions. They acted as checks on leading politicians and were also responsible for much public policy (cf. Aristotle Politics 1274a4–5).

Third, significant influence was exerted by a ‘political class’ with significant wealth who often had rhetorical education, i.e. the kind of people who would have paid very good money to be taught by Protagoras and other sophists (itinerant philosophy, politics, and economics teachers who were much in demand in ancient Greece; several readers of this piece will presumably fall into one of these groups or the other). However, although it was sometimes claimed that Athens was a democracy primarily in name (e.g. Thucydides 2.65.9), it is unclear that elites dominated Athenian political life (Hansen 1987, 1991). At any time, a significant number of those who served as jurors and who attended the assembly would have previously served in the council and instead of seeking approval in occasional elections, leading political speakers and members of the elite had to continually command or commandeer public approval. As a result, they could expect close scrutiny and ran significant risks (cf. Balot 2014).

It has been argued, most notably by Josiah Ober (1989, 2008), that Athens’ success in an unforgiving environment was largely due to the role of its democratic institutions in promoting rational deliberation and efficiently employing the knowledge of its citizens (and even that Athens serves as a case study for the success of direct democracies, Ober 2017). Thus, for instance, while democratic deliberation imposed significant costs, Ober (2006, 2008) argues that knowledge dispersed among the citizenry could be aggregated through social networking (e.g. in demes and in the βουλή) and social incentives (e.g. honours). Ober also suggests that public rituals, ceremonies, and other practices allowed those who shared the relevant preferences to better coordinate their actions (cf. Chwe 2001) and the nature and settings of meetings (e.g. in the courts) was such that they contributed towards a sense of unity and allowed a large body of citizens to build common knowledge. Athens’ direct democracy was thus able to effectively employ the dispersed knowledge of its citizens to a
degree other political arrangements (including representative democracy) could not match. The involvement of Athenian citizens led to: more realistic and sustainable policy; non-experts contributing relevant knowledge which would not come to light in deliberations among experts; and increased transparency and accountability (which decreased corruption and partial interests).

Ober’s account of Athenian democracy has been highly influential and is attractive in several respects, but faces some potential objections. First, the state of the evidence makes it difficult to measure many of the relevant variables – let alone to attempt to discern a causal relation between them – and the fates of other states (e.g. successful, non-democratic states and unsuccessful, democratic states) seem to constitute counter-evidence to several of Ober’s central theses. Even if one were to grant that Athens was most successful when most democratic, it seems that Ober is – at best – offering an eikos muthos (likely story) about how ancient Athens may have effectively employed the knowledge of its citizens. (One might draw parallels with the kind of optimistic story that Plato’s Protagoras offers about democratic elements in Protagoras 320c8ff.) Second, one might worry that there is a certain circularity in arguing that Athens was successful because it was distinctively effective in employing its citizens’ knowledge while assuming that Athens was distinctively effective in employing its citizens’ knowledge effectively at least in part because it was successful. Third, and most saliently, while it seems plausible that the relevant democratic institutions and processes may have effectively aggregated the preferences and opinions of the citizenry, it is far less clear that such processes led to epistemic benefits or convergence upon truth or knowledge (rather than mere agreement). It is difficult to identify knowledge as such, and the merest acquaintance with human affairs yields an incredible wealth of examples of ‘successful’ but profoundly and utterly epistemically incompetent agents. This last point is, I think, best understood as the kernel of recurring criticisms of democratic institutions in Plato’s dialogues. It is to this issue that I now turn.

3 Plato’s master argument against democracy

While Plato (or Plato’s Socrates) should perhaps not be read as an unqualified enemy of democracy, the discussions of the shortcomings of democracy in Plato’s dialogues are among the most interesting and influential of the ancient world. Plato is well aware of the difficulties in recognising experts as such, but the case for epistocracy is fairly straightforward. Just as a person who is in need of medical attention should submit themselves to the expertise of a doctor, so too – the thought goes – those in need of governing should submit themselves to someone with expertise in ruling (Republic 488a–489c; cf. Statesman 293a–b, 297e). Any reader of the Republic will be familiar with the fact the imagined city-state of Kallipolis includes few democratic elements and that Plato’s Socrates thinks that: democracies unjustly treat unequals as if they were equals; are not conducive to unity; are excessively focused on freedom and thereby libertine; and are unstable and liable to dissolve into tyranny (e.g. Republic 555b–561d). However, what I take to be Plato’s ‘master argument’ against democracy turns upon its perceived epistemic failings and is, in its simplest form, best understood as going something like this:

1 If \( \alpha \) lacks knowledge of the relevant kind \( K \), then \( \alpha \) cannot rule well (advise well, prescribe action well, etc.);
2 The \( \text{dēmos} \) lacks knowledge of the relevant kind \( K \);
3 The \( \text{dēmos} \) cannot rule well.
Thus, (1) claims that possession of the relevant kind of knowledge, understanding, or expertise (epistēmē, technē) is a necessary condition of successful rule or various kinds of political action. (For discussion, see Nawar 2018: 379–87; cf. 2017.) That is to say, those who wish to govern (advise, etc.) well must have a certain kind of knowledge (cf. Statesman 258b, 259a, 301e–302b; Republic 473c–d; Gorgias 455b–d). While Plato evidently sets the bar on this sort of knowledge rather high, the precise nature of this knowledge or expertise is not immediately clear and seems to be sketched somewhat differently in different dialogues. For instance, in the Republic, it seems to involve an abstruse grasping of the Good sub specie aeternitatis, whereas in other works (such as the Statesman and perhaps the Euthydemus) it seems to be an adaptable managerial expertise whose kernel involves knowing when and where to apply other kinds of expertise (cf. Statesman 304bff).

Concerning (2), Plato’s Socrates agrees with figures like Thucydides but differs significantly from several of his contemporaries. Protagoras seemingly claimed that all citizens have a share of the relevant kind of knowledge (e.g. political expertise [politikē], Protagoras 322bff) and that even the worst and most ignorant of those brought up in a polis learn something of the relevant knowledge (Protagoras 329d). In contrast, Plato’s Socrates thinks that sophists like Protagoras wrongly assign the term ‘wisdom’ (sophia) to the opinions (dogmata) of the majority (Republic 493a; cf. Protagoras 317a) and that the knowledge required for good political rule is in fact very difficult to achieve and not at all widespread (Statesman 292d–e). Genuine knowledge or expertise requires resilience in the face of dialectical examination and – the thought goes – it is a necessary condition of having knowledge or expertise of any kind that its possessor must be able to impart it to others (cf. Meno 93aff; Protagoras 319aff). However, those who are often praised for their political expertise cannot withstand dialectical examination. Moreover, whatever they have they cannot impart to others. Therefore, etc.

Moreover, Plato’s Socrates offers several reasons for thinking that the citizenry of any democracy akin to the Athenian cannot possess the kind of knowledge required for ruling well (Statesman 292e, 297b–c, 300e; cf. Republic 493e–494a; Theaetetus 201a–c). The relevant reasons are difficult to succinctly state, but two deserve special mention.

First, there are various institutional impediments to attaining knowledge (cf. Nawar 2013). The democratic institutions of Athens do not – the thought goes – allow for substantive ‘exchange of reasons’ or the favourable epistemic procedures some philosophers and theorists (e.g. Estlund 2007) hope to find in democracies. More concretely, the heckling or clamour [thorybos] of the assembly makes it difficult to deliberate well or for opposing voices to be heard (cf. Apology 20e, 32b–c; Rep. 492b–c); simply producing some number of ‘witnesses’ in support of some claim is not straightforwardly truth conducive (Gorgias 471e–472a); there was little opportunity for cross-examination; and there was in any case insufficient time for proper examination of any kind (e.g. Apology 37a7–b2; Gorgias 455a). These concerns are nicely summarised at Theaetetus 201a–c, where Socrates discusses several reasons why Athenian jurors might be able to arrive at true doxa (opinion, belief, or judgement) but cannot attain epistēmē (knowledge or understanding) (Burnyeat 1982; Nawar 2013).

Second, not only are there barriers to obtaining knowledge in democratic contexts, but there is frequent convergence upon falsehood and Plato’s Socrates often seems to think that there is something epistemically malignant about political discourse as it is typically practised in democratic contexts. Plato’s concerns turn upon a cluster of features concerning rhetoric, philosophical psychology (cf. Phaedrus 271aff), and the relation between pleasure and truth. In the Protagoras, Plato notes the ‘spell’ cast by figures such as Protagoras (e.g. 315a, 328d; cf. Apology 17a; Euthydemus 289e–290a), and in the Apology, Plato’s Socrates observes that the prosecution’s speeches were so effective that as a defendant he himself was almost carried
Democracy and knowledge in ancient Greece

Aristotle's discussion of the epistemic virtues and vices of democracies is rich but often difficult to interpret. On the one hand, it is often thought that Aristotle is more optimistic than Plato's Socrates about the accuracy of commonly held beliefs (e.g. Rhetoric 1355a14–18; Nicomachean Ethics 1172b35–1173a1; cf. Metaphysics 993a30–b7; Eudemian Ethics 1216b30–1; Rhetoric 1395a10–12) and some of Aristotle’s remarks concerning his so-called ‘endoxic method’ (e.g. Nicomachean Ethics 1145b2–7; cf. 1098b27–29) might be taken to commit him to preserving endoxa (‘reputable opinions’), i.e. ‘those opinions held by everyone, or by the majority, or the wise’ (Topics 100b21–23, 101a11–13), where possible. Moreover, Aristotle's account of the citizen as someone who participates in political deliberation, judging, and ruling seems well suited to democratic regimes (as Aristotle himself notes, Politics 1275b5–7), and one might think that Aristotle’s account of rhetoric offers a sketch of how the emotional effects of rhetoric may be epistemically virtuous rather than vicious (cf. Dow 2015). If Aristotle indeed thinks that the views of the proverbial man on the Clapham omnibus track the truth rather well, then one might think that Aristotle would thereby be inclined to reject the second premise of what I called ‘Plato’s Master Argument’ (see (2) above) and to offer a more positive appraisal of the epistemic features of democracy.

On the other hand, there are reasons to think that Aristotle is no friend of democracy and that he largely agrees with Plato’s Socrates on the epistemic defects of direct democracies. For instance, if we return to the claims made in the previous paragraph, it often seems that Aristotle is often merely claiming that commonly held beliefs are accurate to some extent (not that they are highly accurate) and the so-called ‘endoxic method’ is either rather limited in its applicability or else is something that Aristotle frequently disregards. Equally, the degree to which Aristotle finds an epistemically appropriate role for the arousal of emotions in rhetoric is debatable, and insofar as Aristotle countenances democratic elements his reasons seem to be largely pragmatic (e.g. he worries about faction and civil war and thus offers concessions to the wider populace, cf. Politics 1330a25–28). Moreover, he seems to think little of farmers, tradesmen, and other common professions which would make up the bulk of the citizenry in an ancient democracy. More concretely, Aristotle thinks those who govern should have sufficient wealth and leisure so as not to have to engage in business or labour
(e.g. *Politics* 1328b33–1329a26) and he thinks the ways of life of tradesmen and the like allow for little in the way of practical wisdom and excellence or virtue and do not easily enable people to be good citizens in a good city (e.g. *Politics* 1260a39–b2; 1281b21–28; 1319a19–38).

An important passage in the *Politics* effectively illustrates the interpretative difficulties of discerning Aristotle’s views towards the epistemic features of democracy. In *Politics* 3.11, Aristotle discusses the conditions under which the many – although they are not individually excellent – may collectively prove better than the excellent few, but Aristotle’s discussion is often extremely elliptical and is also highly dialectical and seemingly aporetic. It begins thus:

> The view that the majority rather than those who are the best people, albeit few, should be in control would seem to be well stated, and to involve some puzzles, though perhaps also some truth. For the many, each of whom individually is not an excellent man, nevertheless may, when they have come together, be better than the few best people, not individually but collectively, just as dinners to which many people contribute are better than dinners provided at one person’s expense. (Aristotle *Politics* 1281a40–b3, trans. Reeve)9

Here, and in what follows, Aristotle offers a series of considerations, examples, and analogies to illustrate his claims, but precisely what Aristotle hopes to illustrate and his own attitude towards said claims is not entirely clear. The passage just quoted might be taken to anticipate something akin to Condorcet’s jury theorem or else to suggest that Aristotle is providing an account of how the *dēmos* may collectively have the kind of knowledge or virtue required for effective political action even though the members of the *dēmos* individually lack such knowledge or virtue (Aristotle would thereby be offering a reason to reject the second premise of the ‘Master Argument’ I attributed to Plato). Some have indeed read the passage along such lines (e.g. Waldron 1995). Thus construed, Aristotle is illustrating the benefits of epistemic heterogeneity or diversity (in something like the manner made familiar by Hong and Page 2004 and Surowiecki 2004) and how – through reason giving exchanges in deliberative democratic contexts – a crowd of persons who are not especially knowledgeable individually may epistemically outperform groups of experts. Others think that Aristotle has in mind a more straightforwardly additive summation procedure or ‘sheer aggregation’ in representative democratic contexts (e.g. Lane 2013). However, it has also been argued that Aristotle is not in fact making an epistemic point at all (Cammack 2013) (or at least not directly).10 Any satisfactory account of Aristotle’s views on the epistemic features of democracy must make some headway in resolving the interpretative difficulties of *Politics* 3.11 and must also address how Aristotle conceives of the virtue and practical wisdom of political and social groups.

## 5 Democracy and knowledge in Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophy

While the rise of Macedon brought about enormous changes in the Greek world, the Greek *polis* endured and philosophers continued to think about politics. The Stoics in particular seem to have given significant attention to political thought but their views are difficult to reconstruct on the basis of the surviving evidence. Unlike the Epicureans (who are usually understood as quietists, cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.119–120), the Stoics claimed that, provided there is no obstacle, ideal rational agents should engage in politics and do so with an eye to promoting virtue (Diogenes Laertius 7.121).11 Given the nature of the Hellenistic age, it is understandable that our sources preserve practical advice concerning how Stoics should
advise kings (e.g. Plutarch *De Stoicorum Repugnantibus* 1043c), but it has been argued that early Stoics, such as Zeno of Citium (334–262 BCE), the founder of the Stoa, had a ‘tendency towards democracy’ (Erskine 1990) and that the Stoic preference for a mixed constitution (i.e. one which combined monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements, cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.131) was a later development.

However, it is not clear to me that the Stoics had reason to be favourably disposed towards democracy. Whatever role Zeno may have played in third-century Athenian politics (Erskine’s case rests primarily upon historical reconstruction of the political context, but one should keep in mind that Zeno was not an Athenian citizen), preference for a mixed constitution seems to be attributed to both Zeno and Chrysippus (Diogenes Laertius 7.131). Moreover, and more saliently for those interested in political epistemology, the Stoics claimed that rulers must know (gignōsko) about good things and bad things and that only those who possess such knowledge are fit for public office or should serve as jurors or speakers (Diogenes Laertius 7.122). They thereby seem to accept the first premise of the ‘Master Argument’ I attributed to Plato. Moreover, while the Stoics took knowledge or apprehension (katalēpsis) to be fairly common and widespread (Nawar 2014a), the kind of knowledge required for ruling well seems to be a form of wisdom, i.e. a steadfast and rationally resilient system of such apprehensions or items of knowledge possessed only by the wise (cf. Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.151–53; Stobaeus 2.73.16–74.3 = LS 40H; Nawar 2014a), which the Stoics thought was not at all widespread. It seems that the Stoics would thereby also accept the second premise of the Platonic argument against democracy.

In his history of the rise of republican Rome, the Greek historian Polybius (c. 200–118 BCE) was inclined to view classical Athens as successful in spite of its democratic nature and – in Platonic fashion – likened it to a ship without a captain while warning of the dangers posed by political flattery of the populace (Polybius 6.44, 57). Polybius’s view of Rome as embodying a mixed constitution was influential (cf. Cicero *De Re Publica* 1.45, 69), but the precise extent and nature of Rome’s democratic elements is more controversial. Roman citizens did not have the kind of political equality enjoyed by the citizens of classical Athens, but the populus elected magistrates and played an important legislative role in the Roman republic.

Cicero thought democracy wrongly treats unequals as equals and does not allow for distinctions in dignitas (*De Re Publica* 1.43, 53). He was inclined to criticise the libertine nature of democracy by offering paraphrases of Plato (*De Re Publica* 1.66–67; cf. *Plato Republic* 562c–563e) while emphasising that aristocratic government by the virtuous avoids the dangers of monarchical rule, on the one hand, and the errors and thoughtlessness (error et temeritas) of popular rule, on the other (*De Re Publica* 1.44, 52, 65). Cicero gives significant attention to rhetoric in various works and discusses eloquence, trust (fides), and the nature of the ideal political speaker in significant detail. However, although he thinks that good political orators should give pleasure to their listeners and move their emotions (e.g. Cicero *Brutus* 184–88), he seems to give relatively little attention to epistemic issues. While Roman liberty or freedom (libertas) (e.g. Cicero *De Re Publica* 1.55, 69) has been much discussed (cf. Pettit 1996, 1997; Skinner 1998), Roman consilium and the epistemic features of the democratic elements of the Roman republic have thus far attracted less in the way of attention from political and philosophical scholars and may merit further investigation.

Given that Hellenistic monarchs and Roman emperors were no less susceptible to flattery than democratic populaces, it is unsurprising that the philosophers of later antiquity had much to say about political flattery and frankness of speech (parēśia). However, although later antiquity saw no shortage of practical advice for kings, there seems to have been relatively little interest in philosophically examining the virtues and vices of different forms of
government or attending to their epistemic features. Philosophical writers such as Plutarch touched upon the democracies of the past (his biographies of ancient figures – many of them Athenians – frequently repeat the kinds of criticisms of the Athenian dēmos one finds in Plato’s more sour moments), but it seems that democracy attracted little interest in the Roman empire. Even when commenting on Plato’s *Republic*, later Platonists seem to have been inclined to focus their attention on other, ‘higher’ matters and even Augustine – who gave significant attention to various epistemic matters of significant philosophical interest (cf. Nawar 2019) and offered arguably unprecedented attention to testimony (cf. King and Ballantyne 2009; Nawar 2015), how reasoning can go wrong in group settings (cf. Nawar 2014b), and various features of social epistemology and rhetoric – showed little interest in democracy or the epistemic features of particular political contexts.

**Notes**

1. On Plato’s telling, Protagoras promised to teach men good judgement (euboulia) and political expertise (političē technē) and make them into good citizens (Protagoras 318e–a). For Protagoras’s relativistic views and responses to them, see Nawar (2020).

2. The *Laws* (for which, see Bobonich 2002; Annas 2017) makes the case for a ‘mixed constitution’ which combines monarchical and democratic elements (e.g. *Laws* 693d–694a). For an influential discussion of (Plato’s) Socrates, see Kraut (1984). On the importance of conversation and dialogic elements, see McCabe (2015); Duncombe (2016).

3. Criticism of democracy and admiration of Sparta is fairly widespread in extant classical works, but often seems to be driven primarily by elitist snobbery. On Sparta and its portrayals, see Cartledge (2001); Powell and Hodkinson (2002). For useful overviews of Greek political thought, see Ober (1998); Balot (2006).

4. For discussion of the characterisation of this expertise as *kingly* and discussions of ancient accounts of monarchy, see Atack (2020).

5. The extent to which the relevant sketches are consistent is controversial and has long been so (since at least John Stuart Mill and Benjamin Jowett, see Schofield 2006). Readers of Plato have long wondered how useful the knowledge of the good sketched in the *Republic* might be (e.g. Nicomachean *Ethics* 1096b31–1097a14, but cf. *Republic* 500a–d). For discussion of the relevant expertise in the *Statesman*, see Cooper (1997); Lane (1998); El Murr (2014). On the *Euthydemus*, see Nawar (2017). For Plato’s views on expertise, as well as those of Isocrates, the Sophists, Hippocratic writers, and several others, see Nawar (2018, forthcoming). Despite the interpretative difficulties, it seems fairly clear that, in contrast to some other figures, Plato’s Socrates thinks the relevant kind of knowledge involves a deep and holistic understanding of things (cf. Schwab 2016) as well as the ability to do various things (cf. Nawar 2017, forthcoming) and that possession of mere opinions or judgements (doxa) – even if true or correct – is not enough for good political rule (cf. *Crito* 47aff).

6. Aristotle characterises the citizen *simpliciter* as one who has a share in judging (krisis), ruling (archē), and deliberation (bouleusis) or as someone who shares in ruling and being ruled (*Politics* 1275a22–23, 1275b17–21, 1283b42–1284a3). Cf. Miller (1995); Kraut (2001); Schofield (2011); Inamura (2015); Riesbeck (2016).

7. Aristotle often characterises democracies in terms of their prioritisation of freedom and equality (e.g. *Politics* 1290a40–b1, 1294a10–11; 1317a40ff; *Rhetoric* 1366a4), but he thinks democracies wrongly accord freedom too great a value (cf. *Politics* 1310a28–38; 1317a40ff) and that political equality should exist only between those who are indeed equals in all the relevant respects and not merely equal in one respect (e.g. freedom) (*Politics* 1280a9ff; 1301a25ff).

8. Aristotle’s views of the epistemic features of rhetoric are complex and controversial. However, one may note that Aristotle discusses the potential for bias and partiality in those who listen to deliberative oratory (e.g. *Rhetoric* 1354b4–11; cf. *Politics* 1330a20–5) and how arousal of the emotions (or at least certain emotions) impairs the judgements of jurors (cf. *Rhetoric* 1354a16–25). He suggests that enthymemes (i.e. the kinds of arguments which are the principal stock in trade of genuine rhetoric) do not or should not end up leaving an emotional effect upon the listener (*Rhetoric* 1418a6–17; cf. *Rhetoric* 1404a1–5).
9 Note that part of the text is corrupt. I here simply offer Reeve’s (2017) translation.
10 For important discussion, see also Bouchard (2011); Schofield (2011); Bobonich (2015). For useful
discussion of distinct models of ‘institutional epistemology’, see Anderson (2006).
11 Zeno may have seen a kind of cosmopolitan community comprised entirely of wise citizens as an
ideal, but it has also been argued that this was a later development within Stoic thought (for dis-
cussion, cf. Schofield 1991, 1999; Vogt 2008). The few reports that have come down to us about
Zeno’s Politeia (Republic) focus principally on scandalous details concerning sexual relations, incest,
and cannibalism.
12 According to the Stoics, the wise – who alone were free (eleutheros) and kings (basileas) – were
incredibly rare individuals (Plutarch De Stoicorum Repugnantias 1048e; De Commnibus Notitiis ad-
versus Stoicos 1076b–c; Sextus Empiricus Adversus Mathematicos 7.432; Alexander of Aphrodisias De
13 It has been argued that Rome should be viewed as a democracy (and even a direct or deliberative
democracy, e.g. Millar 1998; cf. Lintott 1999; Morstein-Marx 2004). Cicero would have been
horrified.

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