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»There's nothing worse than athletes«
Criticism of Athletics and Professionalism in the archaic and classical periods

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Victory in the great athletic games was widely seen in the Greek world as one of the summits of human achievement. Yet a surprisingly large number of texts present a negative view of athletics, including Xenophanes fr. 2 West and Euripides fr. 282 *TrGF*. The reasons for this criticism – which has variously been interpreted as a critique of the aristocracy, professionalism in sport or the reaction of a minority of intellectuals – remain obscure. This paper argues that opposition to athletics was not political but part of a longstanding debate on the relative merits of different forms of skill (τέχνη). This debate was prompted by widespread economic specialisation and professionalism in the fields of athletics, poetry and philosophy (among others). The criticism of athletics becomes part of a strategy, by which the professional promotes his own form of τέχνη, with the implicit aim of winning respect and financial rewards. Professionals operated in a market for knowledge, one in which they had to sell their skills, justify their fees and counter common prejudices against paid work. Our texts reflect the tendency for professionals to achieve these aims by launching pre-emptive attacks upon their competitors. Athletes became a common target for such invective because their unwavering popularity and success at eliciting rewards in the archaic and classical periods made them a constant target of envy from other professionals.

Introduction

Victory in the great athletic games was, for Pindar and his patrons, one of the summits of human achievement, comparable with the deeds of ancient heroes. Criticism of athletics in antiquity represents a striking and, for the enthusiastic student of ancient sport, even disturbing challenge to this ideal. Despite firm evidence for the unwavering popularity of athletics in the ancient world, the anti-athletic tradition is striking both in its ubiquity and its longevity. Two poems cited together by Athenaeus, Xenophanes fr. 2 West and Euripides fr. 282 *TrGF*, stand out as exceptionally full and comprehensive polemics, yet the views expressed in these works are echoed frequently in literary works of multiple genres and all periods.[1] Each critique contains some or all of the same features: a) the usefulness

[1] Tyrt. fr. 12 West; Eur. *El.* 882-3; Ar. *Eq.* 535; Eupolis fr. 129 K–A; [Hipp.] *Alim.* 34; Pl. *Ap.* 36d6–9; Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.1, *Symp.* 2.17; Isocr. 4.1, 15.250, *Epist.* 8.5; Timocles fr. 8 K–A; Dio Chrys. 9.10-13, Diog. Laert. 1.55–56, 6.2.27; Diod. Sic. 9.2.5; Plut. *Phil.* 3.2–5, *Ages.* 20.1; Gal. *adhortatio* 9-14.

of athletics and athletes to both the family and the state, in peace and in war, is questioned; b) it is implied that other practices are more useful; and thus c) the decision to grant athletes honours and / or material rewards is declared suspect.

Not surprisingly this tradition – and the Xenophanes and Euripides fragments in particular – have been subjected to frequent scrutiny by scholars. A central problem is how to reconcile such hostile sentiment with the evidence for the unwavering popularity of athletics in all periods of Greek history. A common conclusion, and one broadly accepted by the most recent commentator on the tradition, is that the critics represent a minority view: an exception that proves the rule of the pre-eminence of athletes and the dominance of athletics among the citizens and practices of the ancient Greek state.[2]

But what are the motivations behind these dissenting voices? Three different broad strands of interpretation are discernible. First, on the understanding that athletics was predominantly an elite practice at least until the fifth century BC, it has been suggested that an attack on athletics is tantamount to, and intelligible as, an attack upon the aristocracy.[3] This class may be defined as the wealthiest citizens, capable of paying liturgies and living a life of leisure off the income of their estates.[4] Second, the opposite approach has also been taken, whereby professional athletes are criticised by elite writers.[5] These two views are similar in that they both presuppose a political motivation but disagree on which side of the political spectrum these authors belong. As I will argue, however, neither of these explanations is entirely supported by the texts, since at no point is the existing wealth of athletes criticised, but rather the material rewards they receive. On the other hand, there is no explicit condemnation of such

[2] Papakonstantinou 2014, 323; cf. García Soler 2010, 153 on the new »discourse of a limited circle of intellectuals ... who never managed to convince the masses«; Marcovich 1978, 18 = 1991, 78 on »Xenophanes' rebellious attack on the traditionally highly esteemed *Ὀλυμπιονῖκαι*«; on Euripides see Pritchard 2003, 325 and 2013, 153; on Isocrates see Seck 1976, 353; Usher 1990, 149–150.

[3] On Xenophanes see Jaeger 1934, 230–234; Biliński 1961 31–33; on Euripides fr. 282 see Pritchard 2003, 324–325; 2013, 152–155; on Eupolis fr. 129 K–A see Telò 2007, 577-6; on Euripides *Electra* see Arnott 1981.

[4] See Pritchard 2013, 3–7.

[5] Professionalism: see Gardiner 1930, 99–100; Harris 1964, 47; Bernadini 1980, 83–84; Pechstein 1998, 74. Bowra 1938, 271 argued Xenophanes belonged to »aristocratic order of society«, though at a time when professionalism was common neither among athletes, nor poets; cf. Bernadini 1980, 90 *Le parole di Senofane ... sono polemicamente rivolte ai membri della sua stessa classe, cioè agli aristocratici*; and Papakonstantinou 2014, 322, who sees Xenophanes' poem as part of a »debate, conducted primarily within the ranks of the elites, on the meaning and value of traditional concepts and practices.«

payment in general, but rather a conviction that others are more deserving of those same rewards.

The final strand of interpretation sees the debate as being less between different political classes but rather on the relative merits of intellectual and physical ability: in other words a battle between »brains and brawn«, or athletes and what John Harris has termed »the nerds«.[6] Modern critics of the disproportionate amount of attention and money paid to today's sportsmen, especially footballers, are not hard to find; and scholars have had little difficulty in picturing the likes of Xenophanes and Euripides among a party of jaded intellectuals.[7] Yet a simple dichotomy between intellectuals and sportsmen cannot explain the tradition as a whole, since many of these critics were also proponents of physical education, especially as training for warfare, and merely doubted the efficacy of athletic training.

What is needed, I suggest, is an approach which takes account of the tradition as a whole and attempts to understand it within its broader context of invective against rival professions and their practitioners. Attacks on athletics should not be seen in isolation, but as part of a long-running debate on the relative merits of different skills, in which all the participants have as their main aim the promotion of their own particular field through the denigration of another. In his study of interactions between athletics and drama, Larmour suggested that apparent rivalry between poets and athletes can be explained by the fact that both groups were competing in parallel contests of skill.[8] Moreover, as Harris has demonstrated in his study of Socrates' criticism of athletes in Plato's Apology, invectives against athletes can be used not primarily to denigrate athletes, but to demonstrate the speaker's particular form of skill (*σοφία*).[9] In what follows, I will attempt to build on these insights to examine the uses made of invective by a wide range of professional groups.

The Value of Athletics

Criticism of athletics is never disinterested, but always aims to suggest that another practice is more useful and its practitioners are therefore more worthy of honours and rewards. In many cases, athletics is

[6] Harris 2009. On Euripides the »intellectual« see the bibliography at Pechstein 1998, 76–77.

[7] E.g. Pritchard 2003, 325 on Euripides fr. 282, »indignant advice ... [which is] often heard today amongst the chattering classes of sports-mad Australia«.

[8] Larmour 1999, 41–44.

[9] Harris 2009, 159, 167–189.

contrasted with intellectual activities in general, covering a wide range of different skills. For Xenophanes it is his wisdom that is better than strength and makes him more worthy of reward:

> *οὐκ ἐὼν ἄξιος ὥσπερ ἐγώ · ῥώμης γὰρ ἀμείνων*
> *ἀνδρῶν ἠδ᾽ ἵππων ἡμετέρη σοφίη.*
>
> *(fr. 2.11–12).*

Euripides' speaker in the *Autolycus* seems to echo Xenophanes by proposing the wise and the good (*σοφούς τε κἀγαθούς* fr. 282.23) as more suitable recipients of the honours traditionally granted to useless (*ἀχρείους* 15) athletes. A character in Eupolis' *Demes* (fr. 129 K–A) makes a similar comparison between a victorious runner and the good and *useful* citizen (*ἀγαθὸς ᾖ καὶ* χρήσιμος πολίτης).[10] This vague category of the good and wise citizen is clarified a little in the *Autolycus*, where Euripides singles out those who prevent civil disorder with words (*ὅστις τε μύθοις ἔργ᾽ ἀπαλλάσσει κακά* 26). This line echoes the dichotomy made by Odysseus between physical form and the ability to speak in public:

> *οὕτως οὐ πάντεσσι θεοὶ χαρίεντα διδοῦσιν*
> *ἀνδράσιν, οὔτε φυὴν οὔτ᾽ ἄρ φρένας οὔτ᾽ ἀγορητύν.*
>
> *(Od. 8.167f.)*

Euripides may thus be invoking both the claims of poets, who, as Xenophanes claims, promote good order (*εὐνομίη*) in cities, and of orators under the general label of those who are able to speak.[11]

In another possible echo of Xenophanes, Isocrates promotes the counsel of the man who thinks well, contrasting the strength of the body (*τὰς μὲν τῶν σωμάτων εὐτυχίας* 4.1; *ῥώμη* 4.2) with that of the mind/soul (ψυχή). On three occasions he reflects on the superiority of those who cultivate the mind, and on each occasion he has a different group or individual in mind. In the *prooemium* of the *Panegyricus* (4.1–2), Isocrates refers obliquely to his ability to give good advice as an orator; in the *Anti-*

[10] Runner (*δραμών*) is the reading of Athenaeus 408d. Storey 2003, 141 interprets a variant reading *βαλών* as a reference to *kottabos*. For a detailed defence of Athenaeus' text see Telò 2007, 575-86. Even if *kottabos* is the contest referred to here, this fragment should still be seen as part of the anti-athletic tradition since *kottabos* can be mentioned in terms that evoke athletic victory (cf. Soph. fr. 537 *TrGF*) and Eupolis' criticism contains the main elements common to the tradition.

[11] Cf. Giannini 1982, 67, who suggests that the formula *σοφούς τε κἀγαθούς* may refer to two separate groups: poets (*σοφοί)* and statesmen *(ἀγαθοί)*. However, as Pechstein argues (1998, 68; cf. Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 411) *σοφία* can imply rhetorical skill; yet by the same token it need imply that rhetoric is the only skill alluded to.

dosis, as part of the case for his educational programme, he includes himself and his students among those who study philosophy (*τῶν φιλοσοφούντων* 15.250); while the letter to the rulers of Mytilene is concerned with the fate of the musician Agenor (*Epist.* 8.5). Like Xenophanes and Euripides, he stresses that these intellectual activities are of greater value to others than athletics (*ἀνδρὸς εὖ φρονήσαντος ἅπαντες ἄν ἀπολαύσειαν* 4.2). The chorus of *Clouds* similarly commend to Strepsiades the ways of Socrates and his pupils over the gymnasia and other mindless practices (*γυμνασίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνοήτων* 417). Socrates himself, in Plato's *Apology*, uses athletics as a means of measuring the benefits his particular brand of wisdom have confered on Athens. In considering what he, like Xenophanes, *deserves* to suffer in return for the benefits of his teaching (*τί οὖν εἰμι ἄξιος παθεῖν τοιοῦτος ὤν*; Pl. *Ap.* 36d), he judges himself more worthy of reward than equestrian victors at Olympia. The main point at issue is the relative worth of the speaker's wisdom when compared to the achievements of athletes. The precise form of that wisdom, though often unspecified, depends on the individual speaker and his particular agenda.

The contrast is, however, less between »brains and brawn« and more the relative merits of athletics and any occupation or practice an author wishes to promote. According to Xenophanes, strength is merely less beneficial than his own wisdom; while Isocrates (15.181) concedes that athletics, though subordinate to the more important training of the soul, is still a fundamental part of general education. Nowhere in the tradition is the importance of a good physique explicitly challenged. Physical fitness is always essential in warfare and therefore beneficial for the soldier and useful to the state. Yet as our earliest source, Tyrtaeus (fr. 12 West), notes, excellence in sport is not the same as proven ability in war and should not therefore be honoured as highly. To Xenophon's Socrates, a good body is essential for war – the major contest, unlike Olympia, for which his companion Epigenes should train – and therefore of the utmost utility; yet athletics is never suggested as a method for keeping fit, despite the fact that it was the only systematic physical training available in Athens.[12]

Similarly Euripides' *Autolycus* (19–23) tacitly concedes the importance of warfare, yet argues instead that athletic training fails to prepare the sportsman for war, since no one fights in a battle with a discus or by boxing. In Euripides' *Electra*, a play replete with athletic metaphors, Electra greets and crowns Orestes like an athletic victor (800–802), but

[12] *ἢ δοκεῖ σοι μικρὸς εἶναι ὁ περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους ἀγών*; *Mem.* 3.12.1; cf. *Mem.* 3.5; *Oec.* 11.11–18: the fitness regime of Ischomachus does not include athletics. On military training see van Wees 2004, 87–101.

stresses that his achievement is much greater by dismissing a running race, unlike actual fighting, as fundamentally useless (*οὐκ ἀχρεῖον ἔκπλεθρον δραμὼν* 883).[13] Her main aim is not to seriously attack athletics, as Arnott argued, which would undermine the comparison between Orestes and athletic victors, but to further stress the superiority of Orestes' victory above and beyond what is normally regarded as one of the highest human achievements.[14]

The importance of physical fitness is thus unassailable; yet athletic training may be criticised for damaging the body, thus making it useless in warfare when it should have been most useful: a belief reputedly held by Philipoemen.[15] Medical texts do not question the value of physical health, but rather the ability of athletics and athletic training to improve the body when compared with their own discipline. The Hippocratic corpus argues that the discipline of medicine is better than athletic training, since in specialising on one particular part of the body, and in prioritising strength before all else, it could actually damage an athlete's health.[16] Elsewhere, it is conceded that athletics may form part of a healthy regimen, but only if the training is not excessive and there is a correct balance between diet and exercise.[17]

Specialisation and Competition

Polemics against athletes are thus intended to promote another skill over and above athletics. They are common not despite the popularity of athletics but rather because of it, since the rewards they received were always arguably disproportionate to the value they provided spectators. Athletics was therefore a useful target for those who wished to argue that more attention be paid to their own skills and achievements.

Behind this debate lies the specialisation of knowledge or skill (*σοφία/τέχνη*). As we have seen, the concept of defined fields of ability and expertise can be found as early as Homer. For Odysseus not everyone can be both good at speaking and be beautiful, just as for Euryalus men can be

[13] Athletic metaphors: runner 824–825, 953–956; crown 872, 882; on 386–390 and parallels with fr. 282 see Denniston 1939, 96–97; Pechstein 1998, 79–82; Larmour 1999, 63.

[14] Arnott 1981, 188-90; *contra* Cropp 1988, 159.

[15] πᾶσαν ἄθλησιν ἐξέβαλλεν, ὡς τὰ χρησιμώτατα τῶν σωμάτων εἰς τοὺς ἀναγκαίους ἀγῶνας ἄχρηστα ποιοῦσαν. Plut. *Philipoem*. 3.5.

[16] *ἕξις ὑγιεινὴ κρείσσων ἐν πᾶσιν* [Hippoc.] *alim.* 34; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 404a; Xen. *Symp*. 2.17: athletics only improves part of the body, unlike dancing; Gal. *adhortatio* 9–14.

[17] *De diaeta* 1.2.48–57, 35.94–99, *de diaeta salubri* 7.

divided into athletes and traders.[18] Expertise in more than one field is possible, as Odysseus proves with his discus throw, but is exceptional. Eumaeus lists groups of specialists – prophets, doctors, carpenters, and poets – under the category of »public workers« (*δημιοεργοί*):

> *μάντιν ἢ ἰητῆρα κακῶν ἢ τέκτονα δούρων,*
> *καὶ θέσπιν ἀοιδόν, ὅ κεν τέρπῃσιν ἀείδων.*
> *οὗτοι γὰρ κλητοί γε βροτῶν ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν·*
>
> (*Od.* 17.384–6)

The specialist nature of these skills is demonstrated by the fact that these craftsmen are called (*κλητοί*) from abroad. Not every community can be expected to have either a skilled carpenter or a skilled poet; yet they have a value and supply a general need, hence their role as »public workers«.

Lists of different occupations and skills, often including but not limited to those mentioned by Eumaeus, are common in both the archaic and classical periods.[19] Economic specialisation was certainly complex and well-advanced in classical Athens, where Edward Harris has identified no fewer than one hundred and seventy occupations.[20] As in the *Odyssey*, although it is possible for one person to master several forms of *τέχνη* to some degree, because of the training involved and the need for natural talent (the gift of the particular divine patron of each art) specialisation was common. Solon indicates that each person who wishes to earn a living from one of his list of occupations strives in his own way (*σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος* fr. 13.43). Similarly, the author of the Hippocratic *Ancient Medicine* (1.13–16, 4.1–4; cf. *de arte* 5.30–35, 8.29–41) defines a *τέχνη* as something that must be learned and in which not everyone has an equal measure of skill or ability: a definition he believes holds true both

[18] *Od.* 8.159–164, 166–185.

[19] Hes. *Op*. 25–26 (potter, carpenter, poet, beggar); Solon fr. 13.43–62 (fisherman, ploughman, craftsman, poet, prophet, doctor); [Aesch.] *PV* 441-506 (skills of house-building, astronomy, mathematics, writing, husbandry, sailing, medicine, prophecy and metallurgy); Soph. *Ant*. 334–64 (skills of seafaring, ploughing, hunting and fishing, husbandry, communal living and house-building, medicine); Ar. *Nub*. 331–334 (sophists, prophets (Θουριομάντεις), doctors (ἰατροτέχνας), dithyrambic poets (κυκλίων τε χορῶν ἁσματοκάμπτας) and idlers (ἀργούς). Ar. *Av*. 905–1057 (poet, oracle-monger, astronomer/surveyor, law-salesmen); Pl. *Ap*. 20c–22d (politicians, poets, craftsmen); Pl. *Phaedr*. 248d1–e2 (philosopher; king; politician/financier; gymnast/doctor (φιλοπόνου γυμναστικοῦ ἢ περὶ σώματος ἴασίν τινος ἐσομένου); prophet; poet or artist; craftsman/farmer; sophist; tyrant); Pl. *Prot*. 316d1–e3 (poets, prophets, athletics (γυμναστίκη), music); Pl. *Resp*. 369b5–370a4 (minimum of five specialists needed to start a city: a farmer, house-builder, weaver, cobbler and doctor); Pl. *Gorg*. 464b (δικαιοσύνη, νομοθετική, γυμναστική, ἰατρική).

[20] Harris 2002, 88–99.

for medicine and other arts. Certain branches of knowledge, moreover, such as medicine, could in theory only be disclosed to those students initiated into the profession.[21] The end result of training and frequent practice was a distinction between the expert (*τεχνίτης/δημιουργός*) and the layman (*ἰδιώτης*).

Competition seems to have been fierce both within and, most importantly for our purposes, between separate fields. In categorising specialists as *δημιοεργοί,* Eumaeus implies that each one provides a service of some value that may be in demand in the communities visited by such specialists. Yet the relative value of each branch of expertise was always open to debate by rival groups of *δημιοεργοί.* Poets, as we have seen in the case of Xenophanes, are well placed to demonstrate the advantages of their particular forms of *σοφία/τέχνη*. And as with Xenophanes, an exposition of poetic expertise is often combined with a demonstration of its superiority to other fields. Hesiod declares that he has no knowledge of seafaring (*οὔτε τι ναυτιλίης σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν Op*. 649) – which is termed a *τέχνη* in the *Odyssey* (5.270) and appears in Solon's list of occupations (fr. 13.43–46 West) – but nevertheless he embarks on the discussion because of the special knowledge in singing granted by the Muses, the divine patron of poets (*Μοῦσαι γάρ μ' ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀείδειν* 661). This belief in the superiority of a particular form of knowledge is the same fallacy identified by Socrates in politicians, poets and craftsmen: each group believes it is the wisest because it has mastered one form of *τέχνη*.[22] Criticism of one form of *τέχνη* should be seen as a strategy for promoting another. As the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Art* (*Περὶ Τέχνης*) observed, those who »make an art« out of criticising other forms of *τέχνη* do so primarily not to expose their rivals but to display their own knowledge.[23]

Athletes and athletic trainers had entered this nexus of experts by at least the early fifth century. Protagoras, in Plato's dialogue, lists *γυμναστίκη* as a form of sophistic skill (*τὴν σοφιστικὴν τέχνην Prot*. 316d3) and mentions two examples of experts in this field, Iccus of Taras and Herodicus of Sylumbria.[24] The former was an Olympic victor in the pentathlon who later became a trainer.[25] The latter, who is said to be still alive

[21] [Hippoc.] *jusj.* 3; cf. Xen. *Oec.* 15.11.

[22] *διὰ τὸ τὴν τέχνην καλῶς ἐξεργάζεσθαι ἕκαστος ἠξίου καὶ τἆλλα τὰ μέγιστα σοφώτατος εἶναι* Pl. *Ap*. 22d8–9.

[23] *Εἰσί τινες οἳ τέχνην πεποίηνται τὸ τὰς τέχνας αἰσχροεπεῖν, ὡς μὲν οἴονται οἱ τοῦτο διαπρησσόμενοι, οὐχ ὃ ἐγὼ λέγω, ἀλλ' ἱστορίης οἰκείης ἐπίδειξιν ποιεύμενοι*. 1.1–3.

[24] On athletics as a *τέχνη* cf. Aesch. fr. 78c.55 *TrGF*; Pl. *Alc.* I 108c9–10; *Resp*. 406ab; *Gorg*. 520cd; *Leg*. 840a; Isocr. 15.181–185; Arist. *Pol*. 1279a1–10, 1288b10–22.

[25] *ὕστερον γυμναστὴς ἄριστος λέγεται τῶν ἐφ' αὑτοῦ γενέσθαι* Paus. 6.10.5; Pl. *Leg.* 840a.

at the dramatic date of the dialogue (316d10-e1), is also credited by Plato (*Resp.* 406a-b) with creating a new *τέχνη* (406b9) out of a combination of *γυμναστίκη* and medicine, by which he was able to lengthen his life. Although, as Pleket notes, the term *τέχνη* is most commonly applied to trainers rather than competing athletes themselves, this is something of a false dichotomy since competing athletes not only commonly received training but could also, like Iccus, became trainers themselves in the latter part of their careers.[26] Again athletics, like medicine, is shown to be a *τέχνη* because it is teachable and defined by what it teaches. A regimen of regular practice and special diets distinguished competitive athletes from amateurs. A trained athlete, like a trained doctor, could thus be described as the opposite of a layman (*ἰδιώτης*) in his particular field.[27] As a separate occupation and field of knowledge, it was possible to compare athletics to other species of *τέχνη*. Because of the trainer's interest in diet, athletics is commonly paired with medicine, though other parallel fields include poetry and rhetoric.[28] It is no coincidence that many of the critics of athletics were practitioners in these fields.

Galen claims that athletics only became a *τέχνη* shortly before the time of Plato at a time when athletes first began to specialise on training for specific events: a view which Pleket has taken seriously.[29] There is little or no evidence to support this claim, however, as specialisation seems to have been common in the sixth and early fifth centuries, to the extent that athletes and their families tend to win victories exclusively in either the equestrian, running events or field events. Examples include Pheidolus of Corinth and his sons, who in the late sixth century won three victories at Olympia and one at Ishmia all for the one event of the single horse race.[30] None of Pindar's equestrian victors was ever successful in track and field events. On the other hand, Dandis of Argos, while celebrating in around 472 a record of multiple victories at all four crown games as well as other

[26] Pleket 1975, 82–83 = 2010, 171. On athletics and education see Pritchard 2003, 301–307 = 2013, 46-53, Miller 2004, 186-195; on trainers in competitive sport c. 550–440, see Nicholson 2005, 2–17 and 119–134.

[27] *τὰ δὲ ὕεια ἐς εὐεξίην μὲν γυμναζομένοισιν ἀγαθὰ, ἀσθενέουσι δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτῃσιν ἰσχυρότερα* [Hipp.] *de affectionibus* 52.21–2; *ἀθληταὶ ἰδιώταις·* Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1116b12–13; cf. *ὡς ἰδιωτικῶς, ἔφη, τὸ σῶμα ἔχεις* Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.1; *εὖ τὸ σῶμα ἔχων καὶ μὴ ἰδιωτικῶς* Pl. *Leg.* 839e2-3; doctors: *καὶ ἰατρὸς καὶ ἰδιώτης* Thuc. 2.48.3; *ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἰατρικῆς ἰδιῶται* Pl. *Prot.* 345a6.

[28] *Γυμναστικὴ δὲ καὶ ἰητρικὴ ὑπεναντία πέφυκεν* [Hipp.] *de locis* 35; cf. *VM* 4.5–8.

[29] *ἤρξατο γὰρ ὀλίγον ἔμπροσθεν τῶν Πλάτωνος χρόνων ἡ τέχνη τῶν γυμναστῶν, ὅτε περ καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀθλητῶν ἐπιτήδευμα συνέστη*. Gal. *Thrasybulus* 33; Pleket 1975, 81–82 = 2010, 169–170; 1992, 151.

[30] ›Anacreon‹ *Anth. Pal*. 6.135 = *FGE* 502–3**;** Paus. 6.13.9 = Anon. *FGE* 1484–5; Ebert 1972, 46–48, nos. 6 and 7.

contests, styled himself as a stadion runner (*σταδιοδρόμος*).[31] Athletes specialising in combat events include such great names as Milo of Croton (who won six Olympic victories in wrestling between 540 and 520, six at Delphi, nine at Nemea and ten at the Isthmus).[32] Theogenes of Thasos' victories in the crown games during the first quarter of the fifth century were won exclusively either in the contests for boxing or the *παγκρατίον*.[33] It is possible that Galen was guilty of the not uncommon mistake of synchronising the origin of a practice with the date of the earliest and most abundant evidence available. He may also have been influenced by the ideal of the versatile athletic hero, who in Homer competed in a variety of games.[34] No historical athlete, however, is known to have competed at a serious level in as many events.

If athletes can be seen as working in parallel with practitioners of other forms of *τέχνη*, then it is probable that the anti-athletic traditions forms but one side of the debate on the relative value of these different skills. Despite their privileged status, athletes were active participants in this debate, particularly in commissioning memorials to their achievements in addition to passively receiving honours. As Leslie Kurke argued, Pindar's epinicia need to be understood as demonstrating the benefits the victor confers on the state through his success at the games.[35] In particular, athletes promise to increase the fame of city and make it powerful in war.[36]

Although criticism of athletics generally only presents one side of the debate, dramatists appear to have used contemporary discussions on the value of both athletics and other forms of *τέχνη* as the basis for rhetorical contests (*ἀγῶνες*). Aristophanes' *Clouds* (889–1130) juxtaposed two forms of education (*παιδεία*, 961; *σοφία* 899, 925, 1024) one, involving the new rhetorical and sophistic training, centred on the agora and another, the old education, based in part in the gymnasium and palaestra. The speaker in the Autolycus seems to be involved in just such a contest,

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[31] ›Simonid.‹ *Anth. Pal*. 13.14.1 = *FGE* 822–826 = Ebert 1972, 66–69, no. 15; Olympic victories are known for the *δίαυλος* in 476 (*P.Oxy*. 222 col. 1.8) and *στάδιον* in 472 (Diod. Sic. 11.53.1; Dion. Hal. 9.37.1). Ebert supposes a career of fourteen years from around 481 to 467. Other fifth century victors in multiple footraces include Ergoteles of Himera in the *δόλιχος* around 470 (*SEG* 11.1223; Pind. *Ol.* 12; Paus. 6.4.11, Ebert 1972, 79–82, no. 20) and Nicolaidas of Corinth ([Simonid.] *Anth. Pal*. 13.19 = *FGE* 857–888 = Ebert, 1972, 92–96, no. 26).

[32] τοῦ ... παλαιστέω Μίλωνος Hdt. 3.137.8; victories: Paus. 6.13.5; ›Simonid.‹ *A. Plan*. 24 = *FGE* 784–785; see Moretti 1957, 122; Poliakoff 1987, 117–119.

[33] Theogenes: Paus. 6.6.5–6; *Syll.*[4] 36, 39–41 = Ebert 1972, 118–126, no. 37; see Poliakoff 1987, 121–122.

[34] E.g. *πάντα γὰρ οὐ κακός εἰμι, μετ' ἀνδράσιν ὅσσοι ἄεθλοι Od.* 8.214; cf. Soph. *El.* 690–692: Orestes competes in all the events at Delphi.

[35] Kurke 1991.

[36] See Kurke 1993, 134 = 2010, 208.

since, like Tyrtaeus, he is eager to undermine the suggestion that athletics is a good preparation for war, a key argument in favour of athletics.[37] We can reconstruct both sides of the debate from the fragments of Euripides' *Antiope*. Zethus contrasts what he sees as useful occupations (public speaking and warfare) with the arguably useless *τέχνη* of music. He claims that music not only is less valuable because it is less useful, but also because makes a naturally good man worse:

> *πῶς γὰρ σοφὸν τοῦτ' ἔστιν, ἥτις εὐφυᾶ*
> *λαβοῦσα τέχνη φῶτ' ἔθηκε χείρονα;*
> *(fr. 186 TrGF).*

This is exactly the same argument as that used by the speaker in the *Autolycus*, but this time deployed against a different practice: music. Both argue that their opponents are unwilling to work (*ἀργὸς μὲν οἴκοις καὶ πόλει γενήσεται* fr. 187.4; *οὐδ' αὖ πένεσθαι* fr. 282.7); that their desire for pleasure or food is a drain on their household's resources (*κενοῖσιν ἐγκατοικήσεις δόμοις* fr. 188.6; fr. 282.4–6); and that they fail to benefit the city either in war or counsel (fr. 185; fr. 282.16–28). Equally Amphion does not change the terms of the debate (for example by suggesting that art should be valued for its own sake). Instead he, like Xenophanes, simply turns the argument back against Zethus, arguing that his skill is in fact *more* beneficial because, although admittedly it does not improve the body, it makes a more important contribution in improving the mind (*εἰ γὰρ εὖ φρονεῖν ἔχω, / κρεῖσσον τόδ' ἐστὶ καρτεροῦ βραχίονος* fr. 199.2–3).

Athletes were not the only possible target of invective and we may presuppose on the part of the opponents of athletics an anxiety, or at least awareness, that the same criticisms could be levelled against themselves. Isocrates' criticism of athletes at the Olympic games of 380 needs to be compared with another Olympic oration, delivered by Lysias eight years before. The *prooemium* of Lysias' speech has the same aim as that of Isocrates: to gain the audience's attention and good will. They both mention potential competitors for their attention: in the case of Isocrates it is the athletes, whom visitors to the festival have primarily come to see; however Lysias differentiates himself from a different type of performer, yet one no less prevalent at the festival: the professional sophist.[38] Isocrates tries to claim that the Olympia is exclusively a contest of strength and thus suggests that the prize for which he is competing is the fame for

[37] Sutton 1980, 60 noting that Autolycus is in one tradition Heracles' trainer in wrestling ([Apollod.] *Bibl.* 2.4.9), suggests a debate, reminiscent of that in *Clouds*, on what form of education the young Heracles should pursue.

[38] See Tell 2007.

having advised his listeners well.[39] Lysias, by contrast, states that Heracles originally founded the festival not just as a physical competition, but also as a venue for intellectual display (*ἀγῶνα μὲν σωμάτων ἐποίησεν ... γνώμης δ' ἐπίδειξιν* 33.3). The comparison is therefore not between athletes and orators but between different types of speaker: the true orator and the sophist. The effect is the same, however, since both comparisons stress the speaker's ability to benefit his audience in contrast to their opponents.[40] Sophists are, like athletes, frequently criticised for failing to benefit other people with their teachings.[41] Yet Lysias' distinction between himself and useless sophists (*σοφιστῶν λίαν ἀχρήστων*) is somewhat facile, since Lysias can himself be termed a sophist himself and the usefulness of his speech was always open to question (and in any case could only be determined at its end).[42] As Tell has argued, this term is used in a similar way by Plato as a »derogatory label« for »competing articulations« of philosophy.[43] This is not a serious criticism of a specific group of people, but rather part of a strategy for gaining the audience's favour and dispelling their prejudices. Yet it hints nonetheless at the fierce competition at Olympia, where not only athletes, but also orators, philosophers and poets all vied for the attention of the spectators.

Professionalism

How are we to explain the constant competition between different forms of *τέχνη*? The simplest explanation, and one that is certainly valid, is that competition was a pervasive feature of Greek society. Poets, orators and all types of philosophers sought fame and recognition through an exhibition of their skills to as wide an audience as possible. Festivals – especially, though not exclusively, those at which athletic games were held – provided ample opportunities of this kind. There is, however, an additional reason: all of these groups, including athletes, stood to gain material rewards or money, often from the same patrons or sources. The competition is thus heightened by either a need or a desire to attract funding and, if rewards are forthcoming, to justify those payments. In short, athletes and

[39] ἱκανὸν νομίσας ἆθλον ἔσεσθαί μοι τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ λόγου γενησομένην ἥκω συμβουλεύσων *Panyg*. 3.

[40] Isocr. 4.2.4–5 τοῖς δ' ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν ἰδίᾳ πονήσασι καὶ τὰς αὑτῶν ψυχὰς οὕτω παρασκευάσασιν ὥστε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ὠφελεῖν δύνασθαι; Lys. 33.3 ἀνδρὸς δὲ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ πολίτου πολλοῦ ἀξίου περὶ τῶν μεγίστων συμβουλεύειν.

[41] Tell 2011, 11–12.

[42] [Dem.] 59.21.

[43] Tell 2011, 1–2.

the other groups we have considered were professionals who were able potentially to earn a living from their separate skills.

Professionalism in athletics of the archaic and classical period has been an area of intense scholarly debate and it is necessary here to briefly define what I mean by the term. Young defined professionalism primarily as paid employment and argued that as early as the archaic period athletes from poor backgrounds could and did earn a living from prizes and state rewards.[44] In Young's view, the myth of the amateur athlete had been conjured up by the modern amateur athletic movement who were keen to find an ancient paradigm for a modern aristocratic ideal. This argument has not been universally accepted, largely for two reasons. First, Young arguably underestimates the cost of training and travel, while overestimating the money that could be earned from prizes. Most scholars have therefore concluded that the very poor would have found it difficult to afford the initial investment needed in order to compete successfully.[45] At least one important group of athletes, the competitors in equestrian events, had to be very rich to afford to raise and train horses. Second, the attitude of the Greeks to money had more in common with that of nineteenth century sportsmen than Young allows: both held traders and craftsmen in contempt, prized natural ability above training and believed that a »gentleman« did not work for his living.[46]

However, Pritchard overstates the case by arguing that only the richest were able or willing to take part in athletics, at least in Athens.[47] The cost of training and travel – the only actual barrier to participation – would certainly have excluded the poorest; yet it was a small expense when compared to the cost of paying liturgies, especially when the possibility of future prizes is taken into account.[48] Pritchard argues that fathers who could have afforded only one type of teacher would have chosen a writing master over an athletics trainer. There is unfortunately relatively little evidence to support this view. Pritchard convincingly demonstrates that at least some craftsmen in Athens were literate; however, this proves little other than that education was not the exclusive preserve of the very rich. Isocrates states that Alcibiades scorned the running and combat events

[44] Young 1984, 7–12, 109–175.

[45] For a recent discussion and bibliography see Pritchard 2003, 293–302 = 2013, 39–46.

[46] Pleket 1992, 148–9; contempt for trade or craft: e.g. Xen. *Ap*. 27, *Lac*. 7.1–2; Arist. *Pol*. 1258b; Plut. *Lyc*. 24.4; importance of leisure: e.g. Arist. *Pol.* 1337b–1338a.

[47] Pritchard 2003, 323 = 2013, 66–67.

[48] The trainer Hippomarchus charged one *mina* for a course of lessons (Athen. 584c). By contrast an Athenian could spend thirty *minae* on the relatively cheap liturgy of tragic *choregia* at the Dionysia (Lys. 21.1; cf. Antiphon 6.11–14; Dem. 21.16). On possible subsidies for the cost of training, see Fisher 1998.

because of the low birth and poor education of the competitors (κακῶς γεγονότας καὶ μικρὰς πόλεις οἰκοῦντας καὶ ταπεινῶς πεπαιδευμένους 16.33). This suggests that some could have chosen an education in athletics over one in writing or music. As Young notes, no victorious athlete is known to have achieved anything in the spheres of music or philosophy, just as no »intellectual« ever won a major victory.[49] Moreover, it is possible that athletes themselves trained their sons, just as the children of normally poor writing masters could have learned the family profession in their fathers' schools.[50]

Athletes undoubtedly aspired to what Pleket termed an aristocratic ideology and it may be that as a result of its influence they preferred to ascribe their successes to inherited excellence, rather than training and frequent practice. Yet, as Pleket also notes, it is equally true that from an early period competition at the highest levels required a serious dedication of time and effort. The number of contests at which these athletes competed successfully – in the case of Theogenes thirteen hundred victories in twenty two years (the equivalent of about a victory a week, if this was the span of his whole career) – suggests that, in addition to the training that made victory possible, performing at different festivals in their chosen event was a major, if not their main occupation: what Galen terms *τὸ τῶν ἀθλητῶν ἐπιτήδευμα*.[51] Though Theagenes' tally was probably exceptional, other early fifth century athletes, such as the runner Nicolaidas or the boxer Diagoras were also highly active on the festival circuit.[52] Even if a certain proportion of athletes belonged to the »leisured« elite, we can be confident that the pursuit of glory in the games left them little time for leisure.[53] Pritchard also fails to take into account the trainers, as well as horse breeders and charioteers, who taught athletics for pay. They may not have been able to afford a life of leisure, and yet they had knowledge of athletics.

For our purposes we may thus define the professional as one who practices a specialist skill (*τέχνη*) regularly due to a need or desire for material gain. Professionalism is not solely an issue of class and it should not be supposed that professionals were necessarily poor or from poor backgrounds, since some initial investment was always required to learn and develop a skill. Moreover, given that one of the aims, or at least re-

[49] Young 2005, 23.

[50] E.g. Aeschines, whose work in his father's school is cited by Demosthenes (18.258) to demonstrate his family's poor background.

[51] See Pleket 1975 60 = 2010, 153 and Young 1984, 95.

[52] Nicolaidas: [Simonid.] *Anth. Pal*. 13.19 = *FGE* 857–588 = Ebert, 1972, 92–96, no. 26; Diagoras: Pind. *Ol.* 7.81–87.

[53] Cf. Pl. *Leg.* 807c: *τοῦ γὰρ πᾶσαν τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἔργων βίου ἀσχολίαν παρασκευάζοντος, τοῦ Πυθιάδος τε καὶ Ὀλυμπιάδος νίκης ὀρεγομένου*.

sults, of a successful career in athletics was to receive material rewards, we should not be surprised if the most successful athletes were also very rich. Aristotle similarly noted that skilled labourers could often become wealthy, despite their need to work for a living (*πλουτοῦσι γὰρ καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν τεχνιτῶν*, *Pol*. 3.1278a.24–5). As Finley put it in his discussion of the *δημιοεργοί* of the *Odyssey*, professionals »floated in mid-air in the social hierarchy«.[54] Nor is professionalism solely a question of payment: a willingness to receive occasional gifts is not the same as the regular pursuit for prizes.[55] Moreover, regular paid work is not necessarily the same as a profession, since an unskilled labourer may not possess anything that might be termed *τέχνη*. Athletes fulfil all of these criteria in possessing a specialist skill, which could only be gained and developed through regular training and practice, and in receiving payment in various forms: valuable prizes, cash hand-outs, gifts, food and (for trainers) tuition fees.

Criticism of rewards

Let us now return to the anti-athletic tradition in order to establish what affect the status of athletes as paid professionals had on the competition between practitioners of different *τέχναι.* A significant number of these polemics criticise as unjust the custom of granting athletes material rewards, rather than their rivals. Xenophanes criticises the rewards of meals at public expense (*σῖτ' εἴη δημοσίων κτεάνων* 8) and a valuable gift (*δῶρον ὅ οἱ κειμήλιον εἴη* 9). Plutarch (*Sol.* 23.3) believed that cash rewards (one hundred drachmas for an Isthmian victor, five hundred for an Olympian) originated in Athens with Solon. He also credits Solon with regulating the reward of public dinners (*σίτησις* 24.5), though he does not specifically mention athletes as beneficiaries.[56] Diogenes Laertius, however, saw the Solonian legislation as an attempt to cap and spending on athletes, on the grounds that victors benefited the city less than those who had died in battle.[57] This view certainly echoes the criticisms of Xenophanes and Tyrtaeus and it is not impossible that Diogenes and Diodorus were drawing on Solon's poetry. On the other hand, it may be significant that Diogenes quotes Euripides (fr. 282.12) rather than Solon himself.

[54] Finley 1977, 55.

[55] Pleket 1973, a professional is »a man who spends nearly all his time on training and participation in contests and moreover gets money for it«; cf. Miller 2004, 212–213.

[56] On *σίτησις* for athletes in later periods cf. Andoc. 4.31; Plut. *Aristeid.* 27.2; *IG* I³ 131.11–17.

[57] Diog. Laert. 1.55–56; cf. Diod. Sic. 9.2.5.

Later authors may thus have interpreted Solon's law in the light of the anti-athletic tradition without any additional evidence to support this interpretation.[58] All we can say with confidence is that Xenophanes was responding to rewards established in Athens, and probably elsewhere, by the start of the sixth century.

Similar criticisms appear in the classical period. The character in the *Demes* by Eupolis (fr. 129 K-A) complains that while a victorious runner receives a cup (*χειρόνιπτρον*), the good citizen does not receive a similar prize. The question of why there were prizes for athletics and not for wisdom is discussed in the Aristotelian *Problems* (956b.17–32). Isocrates criticises the founders of the games for deeming athletes worthy of gifts (*ὅτι τὰς μὲν τῶν σωμάτων εὐτυχίας οὕτω μεγάλων δωρεῶν ἠξίωσαν* 4.1). Other polemics concentrate on the public meals (*σίτησις*). Socrates claims that he is more worthy of *σίτησις* than equestrian victors at Olympia.[59] According to Aristophanes, Cratinus should have been granted the right to drink in the Prytaneum on account of *his* victories: possibly an allusion to the same privileges held by athletic victors.[60] A speaker in the comedy *Drakontion* by Timocles attempts to argue, in defiance of received opinion, that parasites are in fact extremely useful (*οὐδέν ἐστι γὰρ ... χρησιμιώτερον γένος* fr. 8.2–3 K-A). He justifies this statement in part by arguing that the parasite's way of earning a living (*ὁ τῶν παρασίτων ... βίος* 15) is essentially identical in all but name to the award of *σίτησις* to athletic victors, which in this case is known as meals in the Prytaneum (*πρυτανεῖα* 19).

The speaker in Euripides' *Autolycus* seems also to criticise this *σίτησις* at line 15. The transmitted text reads »they [sc. the Greeks] honour useless pleasures for the sake of a meal« (*τιμῶσ' ἀχρείους ἡδονὰς δαιτὸς χάριν*). Most commentators on this passage have read the line as a reference to a meal granted by victors to the populace.[61] Yet in the preceding lines it is the athletes who desire food, not the Greeks and there is no parallel in the hostile tradition of an athlete dispensing a meal. Where we do hear of celebratory feasts, they are invariably hosted by equestrian vic-

[58] See Bernardini 1980, 87–88. Papakonstantinou 2014, 321, however, is still open to the possibility that the law represented a »popular discontent with aristocratic athletes« shared by Solon.

[59] *πρέπει οὕτως ὡς τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα ἐν πρυτανείῳ σιτεῖσθαι, πολύ γε μᾶλλον ἢ εἴ τις ὑμῶν ἵππῳ ἢ συνωρίδι ἢ ζεύγει νενίκηκεν Ὀλυμπίασιν·* Pl. *Ap.* 36d6–9.

[60] *ὃν χρῆν διὰ τὰς προτέρας νίκας πίνειν ἐν τῷ πρυτανείῳ Eq.* 535.

[61] Angio 1992, 88; Pechstein 1998, 64–66; Kannicht *TrGF* p.345; Harris 2009, 164–165; *contra*: O'Sullivan and Collard 2013, 388-9 who print Athenaeus' text, yet interpret it as a reference to *σίτησις*.

tors: a type of competitor absent from Euripides' list of athletes (16–17).[62] Unlike the targets of Euripides' invective, horse-owners did not require a protein-rich diet to be successful. As a result, Marcovich suggested that the line be amended to »they honour these useless men after granting them the favour of free food« (*τιμῶσ' ἀχρείους [ἡδονὰς] δαιτὸς <ἐπιδόντες> χάριν*).[63]

The texts themselves provide little evidence to support an attack on the »aristocracy«. Xenophanes (fr. 2.1–9) implies that athletes receive honours and rewards due to their success as athletes and neither here nor elsewhere in the tradition is the existing wealth, family or social status of the athlete a contributing factor. It is not the personal wealth of athletes that is at issue, but the material rewards they receive. Pritchard argues that Euripides fr. 282 may incorporate common criticisms of the wealthy that they eat too much (*γνάθου τε δοῦλος νηδύος θ' ἡσσημένος* 5) and are incapable of working for a living (7–8), for which he cites Menander *Dyscolus* (766–769) and Euripides fr. 54 *TrGF* as parallels.[64] However, Euripides' speaker indicates that athletes are overtaken by poverty specifically in their old age (*ὅταν δὲ προσπέσῃ γῆρας πικρόν* 11). This suggests that the reason for poverty is not merely that they have devoured their patrimony: what has changed is that their bodies, on which they prided themselves in their youth (*λαμπροὶ δ' ἐν ἥβῃ καὶ πόλεως ἀγάλματα* 10), have decayed.

A better parallel is found in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, where Socrates describes those who are able and willing to work but who are misled into spending all they make on vices, including gluttony (*λιχνειῶν*). Like the athletes whom Euripides' speaker castigates, these men ultimately harm their houses (*τοὺς οἴκους κατατρίβουσι*) and are unprepared for old age when they will be unable to continue to work.[65] Athletes who squander their patrimony, rather than their earnings, such as Callias son of Hipponicus and Pheidippides of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, do so on horses.[66] The only other possible reference to the wealth of athletic victors is in Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates justifies his suggestion that he should be

[62] Athenaeus (3e) lists three victors, all in equestrian events, who gave feasts: Alcibiades, Leophron tyrant of Rhegium and Empedocles; cf. Anaxilas' feast after victory with mule-cart: Heraclid. Pont. *Pol*. 25.5; Themistocles' feast at Olympia: Plut. *Them.* 5.4, cf. Arist. *EE* 1233b11–13; Alcibiades' at Olympia: Andoc. 30–31, Plut. *Alc.* 11–12; Chabrias' (chariot victor at Delphi in 373) feast in Attica: [Dem.] 59.33.

[63] Marcovich 1977, 54 = 1991, 126.

[64] Pritchard 2003, 325 and 2013, 153.

[65] *ἐπειδὰν δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀδυνάτους αἴσθωνται ὄντας ἐργάζεσθαι διὰ τὸ γῆρας, ἀπολείπουσι τούτους κακῶς γηράσκειν* 1.22.

[66] Pheidippides: Ar. *Nub*. 13, 39, 117; Callias: Eupolis fr. 164 K-A, see Storey 2003, 181.

awarded with *σίτησις* in part by claiming that athletes do not need the food, while he does (*ὁ μὲν τροφῆς οὐδὲν δεῖται, ἐγὼ δὲ δέομαι* 36e1). However, once again the reference is specifically to equestrian victors alone, who had to be wealthy enough to afford to raise horses. The same cannot necessarily be said for the targets of Euripides' invective: the competitors in track and field events.

This criticism of the athletes' rewards is, however, not a criticism of professionalism *per se*. Rather Xenophanes implies that he deserves the same treatment. Rival groups – such as poets, doctors and teachers or practitioners of rhetoric and philosophy – could also earn large fees from their skills from an early period. Solon (fr. 13.41–43) sees the need to earn a living as the reason why a man might undertake the various occupations he lists. Once again all professions, and not just athletes, are open to the accusation of greed. We may again compare Isocrates' criticism of athletes who do not deserve gifts with Lysias' swipe at useless sophists who need to earn a living (*σοφιστῶν λίαν ἀχρήστων καὶ σφόδρα βίου δεομένων* 33.3). Again, as with athletes, it is the combination of the sophists' dependence on others for subsistence and their failure to provide any benefit in return that is calculated to provoke outrage in an audience. Plato and Xenophon contrast paid sophists with the genuinely wise Socrates, who allegedly never accepted payment for his company (at least not in coin).[67]

As Tell has argued, the term sophist was a broad pejorative label, encompassing, from at least the fifth century, a wide variety of teachers and practitioners who worked for pay.[68] Similar accusations could be levelled at other professional groups including poets and doctors. Aristophanes' Socrates (*Nub.* 331–334) claims that the Clouds feed a diverse group including sophists, prophets (*Θουριομάντεις*), doctors (*ἰατροτέχνας*), dithyrambic poets (*κυκλίων τε χορῶν ᾄσματοκάμπτας*) and general idlers (*ἀργούς*). A similar party of unwanted professionals looking for employment appear in the *Birds* and include a poet (905–958) and oracle-monger (959–991). False prophets and quack doctors are characterised by their eagerness to secure a fee, while poets (such Simonides and Sophocles) could be characterised as acquisitive.[69] Like sophists, if these groups fail to provide good value for the money spent on them, they, like the tragedian Acestor in Eupolis' *Flatterers* (fr. 172.14 K-A), will start to re-

[67] Pl. *Ap*. 19e; *Hipp. Mai.* 282de; Xen. *Symp.* 1.5, 3.6; *Mem*. 1.6.1–5, 13; see Tell 2009.

[68] Tell 2009, 20; 2011, 1–2.

[69] Doctors: ἄνθρωποι βίου δεόμενοι *Morb. Sacr*. 4.17; prophets: Soph. *OT* 388–9, *Ant*. 1055, see Flower 2008, 135–147; Simonides and Sophocles: Ar. *Pax* 697 and Σ *Pac.* 697b (Holwerda II.2 p.107).

semble flatterers or parasites: those who take food but in no way benefit their patrons in return.

Payment (especially in coin) was in itself a potential source of embarrassment to all professionals. None of the critics of athletics ever state an explicit desire to receive payment in any form, though they do appropriate for themselves the symbols of athletic victory, particularly the crown.[70] A likely reason for not doing so is again the prejudice generally against all forms of paid workers or, far worse, parasites. This prejudice is likely to have affected athletes as much as their rivals, since they also stressed the materially worthless crown above valuable rewards.[71] Pindar is perhaps unique in admitting on two occasions (*Pyth*. 11. 41–42; *Isthm.* 2.6–11) that his poems are composed for a fee. Yet on each occasion it is his Muse, rather than Pindar, who works for a living.[72] The poet himself is careful to distance himself from his divine, yet acquisitive, patron and thinks fondly of the days when poets composed for love (*Isthm*. 2.1–6). Yet despite his apparent reluctance, the Muse urges him to remember the saying »money makes a man« (*χρήματα χρήματ' ἀνήρ Isthm.* 2.10). Direct requests for payment, as in the case of the poet of Aristophanes' *Birds* (941–944) who adapts Pindar's *hyporcheme* to the tyrant Hieron (fr. 105b S-M), must be made subtly. The poet employs Pindar's famous phrase »understand what I mean« (*ξύνες ὅ τοι λέγω* 945); his patron Pisetaerus understands and gives him a gift of clothing. Given this unwillingness to talk about money, it is hardly surprising that, in the tradition of invective, it is always a speaker's opponents who have or are interested in money or food, not the speaker himself. In addition to asserting the professional's own claim to status, attacks on rival groups may have seemed a good way of pre-empting potential criticism.

[70] Aesch. fr. 78c.39–40 *TrGF*; Eur. fr.282.24; *El.* 872, 882; Dio Chrys. 9.10-15.

[71] Hdt. 8.26.

[72] *Μοῖσα, τὸ δὲ τεόν, εἰ μισθοῖο συνέθευ παρέχειν / φωνὰν ὑπάργυρον Pyth*. 11. 41–42; *ἀ Μοῖσα γὰρ οὐ φιλοκερδής / πω τότ' ἦν οὐδ' ἐργάτις· Isthm.* 2.6.

Conclusion

I hope to have shown that an awareness of ancient professionalism – and an understanding of the place of athletes within a broad professional class – can lead to new interpretations of the anti-athletic tradition and our literary sources in general. Opposition to athletics was not merely political but part of a longstanding debate on the relative merits of different forms of *τέχνη*. This debate was prompted by widespread economic specialisation and professionalism in the fields of athletics, poetry and philosophy (among others). The criticism of athletics becomes part of a strategy, by which the professional promotes his own form of *τέχνη*, with the implicit aim of winning respect and financial rewards. Professionals operated in a market for knowledge, one in which they had to sell their skills, justify their fees and counter common prejudices against paid work. Our texts reflect the tendency for professionals to achieve these aims by launching pre-emptive attacks upon their competitors. Athletes became a common target for such invective, not because intellectuals or their political opponents were categorically opposed to their work, but because their unwavering popularity and success at eliciting rewards in the archaic and classical periods made them a constant target of envy from other professionals.

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