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Cover Page Footnote

My gratitude goes firstly to the reviewers, whose insightful commentary on this article was much appreciated and helped strengthen it. Many thanks also go to Jon Hesk and Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, who read and commented on various versions of this paper, and gave invaluable feedback throughout. I am grateful to Mirko Canevaro for his expertise on honour, citizenship and class and status in ancient Athens. I would also like to thank the organisers of the Disability at the Intersection of History, Culture, Religion, Gender, and Health conference which was held in March of 2022 and where I had the chance to first present on these ideas. Lastly, I thank all the participants, past and present, of the University of Edinburgh's ERC Project Honour in Classical Greece. The writing of this article was supported by the Douglas and Gordon Bonnyman Scholarship, and the Linda and Gordon Bonnyman Charitable Trust.



JUDGING THE BODY: DISABILITY, CLASS, AND CITIZEN IDENTITY—A CASE STUDY FROM AN ANCIENT GREEK LAWCOURT

JUSTIN L. BIGGI¹

Abstract

This paper aims to showcase how one person's disabled identity—that of the unnamed defendant of the legal speech *Lysias 24*, who was accused of faking his disability to obtain social security payments—interacted with wider conceptions of citizen identity and citizenship in fifth century BCE Athens. This paper brings a much-needed intersectional approach to the speech: by viewing the speaker's disabled identity as shaped by his economic status (and vice-versa), this in turn shapes the way we can interpret his experience of citizen identity, as well as his sense of belonging to a citizen body. Recent approaches in critical theory have laid bare the ways in which class and disability can shape a person's identity and relationship to citizen status. In viewing an ancient text through an intersectional lens, I aim to emphasize the complexities of ancient lived experiences of disability, in turn highlighting and questioning lines of thought that are still prevalent today.

Keywords: ancient history (Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity), disability studies, social justice

¹ Justin Biggi, University of Edinburgh, justinbiggi@gmail.com. My gratitude goes firstly to the reviewers, whose insightful commentary on this article was much appreciated and helped strengthen it. Many thanks also go to Jon Hesk and Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, who read and commented on various versions of this paper and gave invaluable feedback throughout. I am grateful to Mirko Canevaro for his expertise on honor, citizenship and class and status in ancient Athens. I would also like to thank the organizers of the Disability at the Intersection of History, Culture, Religion, Gender, and Health conference which was held in March of 2022 and where I had the chance to first present on these ideas. Lastly, I thank all the participants, past and present, of the University of Edinburgh's ERC Project Honor in Classical Greece. The writing of this article was supported by the Douglas and Gordon Bonnyman Scholarship, and the Linda and Gordon Bonnyman Charitable Trust.

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, a policy of strict austerity rooted in the legacy of Thatcherism has colored the UK's approach to disability support services, with an eye towards increasing the number of people seen as "fit for work," with disastrous (and often deadly) consequences.² Such a eugenic view of disability—as something to be eradicated, removed, or otherwise discouraged—hinges upon the dehumanization of disabled people, socially and civically, following in the footsteps of twentieth-century pseudo-scientists.³ The eugenicists of the 1900s often cited Classical attitudes towards disabled people as a justification for their views, taking at face value works such as those of Plato and Aristotle, who wished to encourage "good breeding" and infanticide as part of their utopian, idealized cities. Furthermore, it has been a longstanding and rarely challenged belief amongst academics that these texts were a direct reflection of ancient day-to-day life, on account that raising a disabled child has been defined as "unprofitable in the extreme."⁴

This has had catastrophic consequences, even to this day. In 2019 it was revealed that between 2013 and 2018 more than 17,000 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants had died before the UK Department of Work and Pensions had made a decision regarding their claim.⁵ In 2021, a *Guardian* article titled "Austerity in England linked to more than 50,000 extra

² Ellen Clifford, *The War on Disabled People: Capitalism, Welfare and the Making of a Human Catastrophe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 241; Jonathan Rutherford, "New Labour, the Market State, and the End of Welfare," *Soundings: Politics and Markets*, no. 36 (2007): 48, 54.

³ For an overview of the intersection of eugenics and dehumanization, and its immediate consequence for disabled identity, see Michael Bérubé, "Disability, Democracy and the New Genetics," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 110; Roddy Slorach, "From Eugenics to Scientific Racism," *International Socialism*, no. 165 (2020), <http://isj.org.uk/from-eugenics-to-scientific-racism/>; Robert A. Wilson, "Dehumanization, Disability and Eugenics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization*, ed. Maria Kronfeldner (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 173–86.

⁴ Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Duckworth Press, 1995), 13. For a more compassionate approach to infanticide in the ancient world, see e.g., Marc Huys, "The Spartan Practice of Selective Infanticide and Its Parallels in Ancient Utopian Tradition," *Ancient Society* 27 (1996): 47–74; Debby Sneed, "Disability and Infanticide in Ancient Greece," *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 90, no. 4 (2021): 747–72. On the care of disabled children (and the evidence for it), see Christian Laes, "Raising a Disabled Child," in *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, ed. Judith Evans Grubbs and Tim Parkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125–44; Debby Sneed, "The Life Cycle of Disability in Ancient Greece" (PhD diss., University of California, 2018), 92–118. Conversely, Cynthia Patterson, "'Not Worth the Rearing': The Causes of Infant Exposure in Ancient Greece," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 (1985): 103–23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/284192> sees exposure of "physically defective infants" (113) as commonplace in the ancient world, taking controversial sources such as Plutarch as factual interpretations of Spartan policy.

⁵ Madeleine Moon, "Personal Independence Payment," December 19, 2018, UK Parliament: Written Question/Answer, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2018-12-19/203812#>.

deaths in five years” pointed the finger at a decade of cuts to the NHS and other social services as the cause of nearly 60,000 unnecessary deaths amongst chronically ill, impaired, and disabled people.⁶ Most applicants to PIP see their claim rejected, and must therefore appeal, a process that usually takes several months during which they must undergo stressful and often poorly accessible meetings to verify their “fitness” for work.⁷

Rooted in ableism, these processes rely on the misguided and cruel idea that most applicants for disability benefits are somehow falsifying symptoms, or are lazy or unwilling to work, and must therefore be found out and stopped from further relying on governmental handouts, even if this may result in their deaths.⁸ At the same time, it is impossible to divorce the discourse surrounding access to disability support from the wider role of class in developing and maintaining disabled identity and, in particular, disabled *citizen* identity.⁹ In his now-infamous 1974 speech, then Conservative rising star (and “father of Thatcherism”) Keith Joseph wasted no time in connecting the “fitness” of the nation to the “fitness” of its citizen body, inevitably conflating it with economic class:

[The UK’s] human stock is threatened [by lower-class mothers] of low intelligence . . . producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, sub-normal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters . . . If we do nothing, the nation moves towards degeneration.¹⁰

⁶ Andrew Gregory, “Austerity in England Linked to More than 50,000 Extra Deaths in Five Years,” *The Guardian*, October 14, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/14/austerity-in-england-linked-to-more-than-50000-extra-deaths-in-five-years?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other.

⁷ May Bulman, “DWP Admits It Has Wrongly Refused Disabled People Benefits at Record Rate as Cost to Taxpayers Soars,” *The Independent*, February 21, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dwp-pip-disabled-benefit-uk-b2009256.html>; Clifford, *The War on Disabled People*, 163–69. An anonymous applicant quoted in Bulman described the process as leaving her “confused and devastated.”

⁸ Rutherford, “The End of Welfare,” 44.

⁹ Clifford, *The War on Disabled People*, 40; Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso Books, 1995), 35; Nirmala Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), passim; Erevelles, “Disability and the Dialectics of Difference,” *Disability and Society* 11, no. 4 (2002): passim.

¹⁰ Keith Joseph, “Speech at Edgbaston (‘Our Human Stock Is Threatened’)” Political Speech, Grand Hotel, Birmingham, October 19, 1974, Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/101830> The speech cost him his chances of becoming Conservative leader, but in 1981 he was still selected by Margaret Thatcher as Secretary of State for Education and Science; see Roddy Slorach, *A Very Capitalist Condition: A History and Politics of Disability* (London: Bookmarks Publications, 2016), 183–85; for an overview of the influence of eugenics on state policies in the UK and beyond, see Véronique Mottier, “Eugenics and the State: Policy-Making in Comparative Perspective,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 134–53.

These attitudes were not born with the Neoliberalists' view of moralized economic growth as the only worthy matrix along which to judge a nation. In 1907 Francis Galton published his second edition of *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, in which he defines eugenics as “the science of improving stock . . . to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing,” a sentiment still expressed nearly a century later by Joseph.¹¹ At the root of Galton's and other early eugenicists' philosophies lay an obsession with the “perfect” Classical body and an idealized Classical world—particularly ancient Athens.¹² Many of them, such as Charles Kingsley, were familiar with the Athenian Plato and Aristotle's eugenicist writings, ideas which were then echoed in their own works.¹³

In the *Republic*, Plato posits that any *anapēron* (“defective”) child of citizens, either explicitly physically disabled or otherwise “lesser,” be removed from the ranks of those whom he considers *ameinones* (“better” or “satisfactory”), in order to ensure the overall health of his utopian city and effectively removed from social and citizen life (*Rep.* 161a; 460c). Following in his footsteps, Aristotle identifies the supervision and direct intervention in marriages among citizens as the most important thing to consider when developing an ideal city (*Pol.* 7.1334b30–31), and the removal (or culling) of *ateleis* (“imperfect”) children to be a conducive strategy towards this (*Pol.* 7.1335b20–21). In both cases, the moral fiber of the city is equated with the “good stock” of its citizens.

And yet, once we take a closer look at the lived experiences of ancient Greek disabled citizens, we discover a much more nuanced and complex reality. This paper aims to showcase

¹¹ Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, 2nd Edition (London: Dent & Dutton, 1907), 17.

¹² Richard Barnett, “Keywords in the History of Medicine: Eugenics,” *The Lancet* 363, no. 9422 (2004): 1742; Debbie Challis, “‘The Ablest Race’: The Ancient Greeks in Victorian Racial Theory,” in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. Mark Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 116–18; Challis, *The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 58–60, 70–75.

¹³ Matthew P. J. Dillon, “Legal (and Customary?) Approaches to the Disabled in Ancient Greece,” in *Disability in Antiquity*, ed. Christian Laes (London: Routledge, 2016), 167–68 offers an overview of both Plato and Aristotle's approaches to eugenics and “good birth.” For Plato in particular, see William W. Fortenbaugh, “Plato: Temperament and Eugenic Policy,” *Arethusa* 8, no. 2 (1975): 283–305; Catherine Gardner, “The Remnants of the Family: The Role of Women and Eugenics in Republic V,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (2000): 217–35; H. D. Rankin, “Plato's Eugenic ΕΥΦΗΜΙΑ and ΑΠΟΘΕΣΙΣ in Republic, Book V,” *Hermes* 93, no. 4 (1965): 407–20. For Aristotle, see Mariska Leunissen, *From Natural Character to Moral Virtue in Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 81–104; Yiannis Panidis, “Aristotle and Eugenics: A Study of the Relationship Between Biology and Politics in Aristotelian Philosophy” (PhD thesis, University of Crete, 2019).

how one person's disabled identity—that of the unnamed defendant of the legal speech Lysias 24 (conventionally titled *For the Defence of the Pension of an Invalid*),¹⁴ who was accused of faking his disability and low income to obtain social security payments—interacted with wider conceptions of citizen identity and class in fifth-century BCE Athens. In doing so, I aim to emphasize the complexities of ancient lived experiences of disability as a way to not only gain a more nuanced reading of ancient Athenian citizen identity, but also as an effort to push back against the narrative of ancient Greece as a society which condoned and even supported the eradication of all disabled life.

Lysias 24: Contents, Contexts, and Previous Readings

Lysias 24 features the defense of a man accused of defrauding the Athenian administration to obtain a support payment of one *obol* per day.¹⁵ The speech exists in the context of the annual scrutiny that all recipients of benefits had to undergo in order to remain eligible and was part of a wider Athenian system of checks and balances known generally as *dokimasia*.¹⁶ The process of this particular *dokimasia* entails that “the council [inspect] those who are disabled (*tous adunatous*)” (Pseudo–Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 49.4) to ensure they fall within the legal criteria to continue to receive state support. Though such a review was probably just a formality, the payment could be brought into question should someone bring forward a reasonable complaint. In this case, the man stands accused of defrauding the system by both faking a disability and claiming to be poor when he had been seen practicing a trade, as by the fourth century eligibility for the payment (and therefore for the legal designation of *adunatos*) was determined by a complete inability to work and ownership of less than three *minas* (*Ath. Pol.* 49.4).¹⁷

Beyond the legal definition, the term *adunatos* appears to have indicated a broad category of people who were in one way or another considered “unable” (per the word's literal translation),¹⁸ a category to which the defendant says he belongs: “My accuser says that it is not

¹⁴ Martha Lynn Rose, “Ability and Disability in Classical Athenian Oratory,” in *Disability in Antiquity*, ed. Christian Laes (London: Routledge, 2016), 139.

¹⁵ At the time, an *obol* could purchase roughly 3L of wine. See James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London: Fontana Press, 1998), 59–60.

¹⁶ The process of *dokimasia* was employed for a variety of public offices and payments. See Gabriel Adeleye, “The Purpose of the *Dokimasia*,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 24 (1983): 299.

¹⁷ Dillon, “Legal (and Customary?) Approaches to the Disabled in Ancient Greece,” 172–75.

¹⁸ On the definition of *adunatos*, see Carlo Delli Noci, Friederich Stiefel, and Vincent Barras, “De l'invalidé à l'adunatos: Réflexions Sur l'invalidité et Le Trouble Somatoforme Dououreux,” *Revue Médicale Suisse* 13 (2013):

just for me to receive this pension from the state, and this is because I am able-bodied, and therefore cannot be counted amongst those who are disabled (*tōn adunatōn*) . . .” (Lys 24.4).¹⁹ In the *Moralia*, Plutarch echoes Plato (as well as the *Ath. Pol.*) and argues that it is necessary for the sake of the state to dissuade “*tous adunatous*” from seeking out a political career (*An Seni* 791d), and explicitly connects the term to illness, impairment, and physical disability.²⁰ However, the term did not only indicate a condition of physical disability, but could also simply refer to a lower economic status. In Euripides’ *Ion*, for example, it is used in this more general context: “and should I strive to join the upper echelons of the city, I would be hated by the lower classes (*tōn adunatōn*)” (Eur. *Ion* 595-597).

The accuser has brought forward evidence to bolster his accusations: that the defender is not disabled, as he is capable of riding horses; that he is not poor, as he owns a workshop and seems to be practicing a trade; and, finally, that the nature of his character is duplicitous and immoral, as is that of the people with whom he chooses to associate himself.²¹ In the process of deconstructing each point raised by the accusation, the speaker makes numerous references to his day-to-day life, his access needs, and his use of mobility aids, as well as his economic status. For example, he argues that the horses he is accused of owning, a sure sign of wealth, are borrowed, and that they are as necessary to him as his other mobility aids:

For it seems clear to me, members of the jury, that whoever finds themselves in this situation, seeks to live in the easiest way possible, and with the least pain. So I have been [borrowing a horse] as a way to be able to make longer journeys more easily. [. . .] When [the accuser] sees me using two crutches, even though others use only one, he does not suddenly decide I am able-bodied. Then why, as soon as he sees me riding a horse, does

365–68; Walter D. Penrose Jr., “The Discourse of Disability in Ancient Greece,” *The Classical World* 108, no. 4 (2015): 499–523; Martha Lynn Rose, *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece*, Corporealities: Discourses of Disability (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 96–97. For disability assistance payments in particular, see Matthew P. J. Dillon, “Payments for the Disabled at Athens: Social Justice or Fear of Aristocratic Patronage?” *Ancient Society* 26 (1995): 27–57; Arthur R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome*, Aspects of Greek and Roman Life (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968).

¹⁹ In favor of viewing *adunatoi* as a term which identifies disabled people as a distinct group, see Penrose Jr., “Discourse of Disability”; Debby Sneed, “The Life Cycle of Disability in Ancient Greece.” In *Staff of Oedipus*, Rose is openly against conflating “*adunatos*” with “disabled.” For an overview of words used to describe disabled and otherwise impaired people in antiquity, see Evelyn Samama, “The Greek Vocabulary of Disabilities,” in *Disability in Antiquity*, ed. Christian Laes (London: Routledge, 2016), 121–38.

²⁰ Penrose Jr., “Discourse of Disability,” 505.

²¹ Christopher Carey, “Structure and Strategy in Lysias XXIV,” *Greece & Rome* 37, no. 1 (1990): 45; Rose, “Disability in Classical Athenian Oratory,” 140–41; Andrew Wolpert and Konstantinos Kapparis, eds., *Legal Speeches of Democratic Athens: Sources for Athenian History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011), 65.

he decide I am no longer disabled? I need the one just as much as I need the other. (Lys. 24.10-12).

Similarly, the speaker's rebuttals of accusations of ill character are recontextualized within a self-narrative of disability and poverty:

I know, members of the jury, that you must correctly discern between those who are capable of acting with *hybris*, and those who are incapable of doing so. It is unlikely for poor men to act outrageously, but it is far more likely for those who have more than what they need. Nor would someone disabled act with no remorse, and those who can rely on the full strength of their bodies are much more likely to . . . (Lys. 24.15-16).

In both these passages it is clear how the speaker's sense of identity is articulated through both his disability and his poverty, as these aspects actively influence his life, his outlook, and what he views himself as capable of being and doing. Both of these are seen as defining aspects of who he is as a person. And both, as we will see below, have a direct bearing on his own identity as a citizen of Athens.

Where the speaker justifies his using of borrowed horses, he does so because he cannot even afford a mule as a mobility aid. This is because he finds it difficult to work, a fact exacerbated by his disability: "I already have difficulty practicing [my craft] and am not able to hire someone to do it for me" (Lys. 24.6). Whereas a horse in the ancient world would typically be a status symbol and a proof of wealth, the speaker is here arguing that it is the opposite, showcasing how his perceived wealthiness is only an illusion, as he is unable to buy a mule; as well as further evidencing his impairment by needing an additional mobility aid alongside his crutches.

And yet, previous scholarship on Lysias 24 has often focused on only one of these aspects (the speaker's economic status *or* his disabled identity) at a time.²² Issues of class have often taken center stage, exemplified by the tension between the Athenian elites, owners of horses, and the "common" democratic people, a tension which throughout the speech coexists with the

²² For the economic aspects of the text, see e.g., Carey, "Structure and Strategy"; Wilfred E. Major, "Democracy, Poverty, Comic Heroism and Oratorical Strategy in Lysias 24," in *Comic Invective in Ancient Greek and Roman Oratory*, ed. Sophia Papaioannou and Andreas Serafim (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 260–61; Wolpert and Kapparis, *Legal Speeches of Democratic Athens*, 65. For a focus on disability in the speech, see e.g., Rose, *Staff of Oedipus*, 95–100, and "Disability in Classical Athenian Oratory." Dillon, "Legal (and Customary?) Approaches to the Disabled in Ancient Greece" focuses on both but does not engage with disability and poverty as materially connected, but rather as two descriptive elements of the defendant.

jealousy that poorer members of society seem to hold towards those better off than them: “these wicked men who have lost their fortune, and plot against those who still keep it” (Lys. 24.19).²³ These interpretations offer an important reading of the economic contexts in which the speech was written, as Lysias 24 presents a viewpoint rarely seen in most, if any, other legal speeches—that of a poor person—and justly place the speech within the context of wider tensions that existed between the democracy and its elite. On the other hand, those scholars focusing exclusively on disability in the text have made use of the case as an example of the ubiquitousness of disabled people in the ancient *polis* (at least in Athens of the fifth century), to the extent that the Athenians had civic measures in place to ensure that impaired citizens could maintain their status. But such readings, in treating the speaker’s disability and his poverty as two different aspects, rather than two interconnected lines along which he has articulated his identity, deny the representation of the speaker’s life its true nuance and complexity.²⁴ In this speech, class status and impairment are closely intertwined.

Autochthony and the Performance of Citizenship

Marxist and materialist readings of disability have emphasized the ways in which, when taken in concert with ideas of productivity and socio-economic history, the definition of *disability* itself is subject to shift depending on these broader contexts.²⁵ Such readings are closely connected to those “historically specific economic structures” within which a disabled person lives their life.²⁶ The one cannot be defined without the other, as labor is defined by who is capable to undertake it, and this capability (or lack thereof) is defined by the amount of labor a person can or cannot perform.

When we apply this reading to Lysias 24, it becomes clear how the defendant’s disability and class cannot, and should not, be taken separately, or subordinating the one to the other—nor, as pointed out above, are they seen as separate within the speech itself, and within the Athenian legal system as a whole.

²³ For an overview of class tensions in Athens (with primary sources), see David Konstan, *Greek Comedy and Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 74–90; Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens. Rhetoric, Ideology and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 208–9.

²⁴ On Lysias’ tendency to create “personas” for his defendants, see Edith Hall, “Lawcourt Dramas: The Power of Performance in Greek Forensic Oratory,” *Bulletin of the Institute for Classical Studies* 40 (1995): 49–50.

²⁵ Erevelles, “Dialectics of Difference,” 525; Brendan J. Gleeson, “Disability Studies: A Historical Materialist View,” *Disability and Society* 12, no. 2 (1997): 179–202.

²⁶ Erevelles, “Dialectics of Difference,” 525.

This interconnectedness is possible thanks to Athens' somewhat uncommon (for the time) definition of citizenship. Though the defendant is, per his own admission, unable to produce enough income to support himself, this does not preclude his belonging to the citizen body, and yet his being *adunatos* still determines how he relates to the citizen status this belonging grants him. Unlike many other ancient Greek city-states, Athenian citizenship is solely inherent to an individual and relies first and foremost on a codified recognition of one's genetic belonging to the Athenian *demos*. The Periklean citizenship law of 451 BCE is what codified the genetic exclusivity of Athenian citizenship, defined by a common autochthonous origin: that an Athenian citizen is someone who can prove Athenian parentage on both sides, that is, someone who is born of both an Athenian father *and* an Athenian mother.²⁷

The myth of Athenian autochthony is, at its core, a myth about Athenian exceptionalism. Ancient Athenians pride themselves on having never emigrated from elsewhere into Attika, therefore seeing themselves as having an exclusive claim to the land their city had been built upon. It was the myth used by Athens to reinforce the ideology of its own supremacy, and to legitimize its own power by identifying a continuity of descent, from mythical kings to contemporary Athenian citizens.

It is also the mechanism which allows the speaker of Lysias 24 access to his social security. Citizenship can be defined as an interconnected system of rights and duties, determined by *timē*, that is, honor: what one did in service of their city shaped what the city did for them, what honors it conferred them shaped what honor they brought to it and their fellow citizens, and vice versa.²⁸ As such, ancient Greek citizenship can be generally read as performative, as evidenced, for example, when looking at the criteria necessary for Spartan citizenship, which, alongside the usual genetic requirements, ranges from physical (being able to survive the *agōgē*, the youth training program) to economic (having enough money to support the common mess halls). In Athens, however, as having Athenian parents is the predominant criteria for being a

²⁷ Nicole Loraux, *Born of the Earth: Myth and Politics in Athens*, trans. Selina Stewart (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 19–20; Susan Lape, "Solon and the Institution of the 'Democratic' Family Form," *The Classical Journal* 98, no. 2 (2003): 129; Josine H. Blok, "Perikles' Citizenship Law: A New Perspective," *Historia*, 2009, 141–70. This meant that, should a naturalized non-Athenian marry an Athenian, their children would be considered Athenian citizens.

²⁸ Mirko Canevaro, "I Diritti Come Spazio Di Socialità: La Timē Tra Diritto e Dovere," in *Dike. Ovvero Della Giustizia Tra l'Olimpo e La Terra*, ed. Alberto Camerotto and Filippomaria Pontani (Milano-Udine: Mimesis Edizioni, 2020), 163.

citizen, the performativity of citizenship takes a step back, and systems come into place to ensure that even those who cannot fully perform the duties expected of citizens (jury duty, participation in the Assembly, military service, and so on) do not risk *atimia*, a form of disenfranchisement. Class is therefore not a determining factor when looking at Athenian citizenship, strictly speaking. *Timē* is still accessible to poorer citizens, if for nothing other than the virtue of their genetic status as Athenians. In a similar fashion, it is also accessible to disabled (male) citizens.²⁹

This is the material context of citizenship within which the defendant of Lysias 24 is made to articulate his disabled identity. It is evident from his words that he considers himself disabled: the parameters of Athenian society are such that it allows for a category, the *adunatoī*, which it recognizes as being “other” in virtue of its inability to wholly fulfill the requirements of citizenship yet is still part of the citizen body despite this.

It is not a coincidence, then, that poverty and disability are the axis upon which the defendant presents his own identity to the jury, as it is the same axis along which the city of Athens legally defines *adunatos*. As his disability influences his class status, and his class status influences the support and mobility aids he can rely on and through which he must negotiate his day-to-day interactions with other citizens and the space he lives in, so do these two elements comprise the criteria along which he is, or isn’t, deemed “unable.” In analyzing these two elements as they are articulated within the Athenian model of citizenship, which is unconstrained by issues of performativity as much as it is confined by strict genetic definitions, we are able to see how they are important modifiers to an otherwise stable definition of Athenian citizen: male, over eighteen, and capable of military service and political participation. We are also able to see how the one cannot be read as independent from the other, but rather as both contributing to a person’s sense of identity and belonging to his community, both playing important roles in the ways in which identity articulates itself and is expressed. It is, after all, to this sense of common belonging that the defendant appeals in the concluding remarks of his speech: “Do not deprive me of the one thing that I am allowed by my homeland. Do not take away that which all of you have already commonly given me, all because you have been convinced by this one man” (Lys. 24.22.)

²⁹ Dillon, “Legal (and Customary?) Approaches to the Disabled in Ancient Greece,” 175–77.

Conclusion

In the course of this paper, I have used the case study of one ancient disabled individual to problematize simplified readings of the role of disabled people within ancient Greek *poleis*. My aim has been twofold: firstly, to show how definitions of ancient disability, much like their modern counterparts, strongly depended upon their contexts, both social and economic. Secondly, I pushed back against the view of ancient attitudes towards disability as (solely) based on practices of eradication and eugenics, acknowledging the harm that such an approach has done to how we view the inherent value of disabled lives today. Disability always has been culturally contingent, and its definition has changed as society has changed, shaped by class, place, and time.³⁰ And yet, scholarship pertaining to the identity of the unnamed defendant of Lysias 24 has often failed to take the reality of disabled life into account, preferring to focus solely on class as divorced from disability and vice versa, an approach that is both lacking in nuance and ahistorical.

Similarly, ancient Greek attitudes towards disability have historically been viewed as a monolith: a culture which rejected disability wholesale, and rather promoted eugenics and infanticide dictated by idealized views of what constituted a “perfect” democracy. In the nineteenth century, these “utopistic” writings of Plato and Aristotle were adopted by a growing eugenicist movement as justification for its efforts towards eliminating what it viewed as dangerous imperfections within the human “race.” The ramifications of this have been long-reaching and have proven to be actively harmful to disabled people today, shaping disability legislation in the UK for decades.

³⁰ Joseph N. Straus, “Autism as Culture,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 462.

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